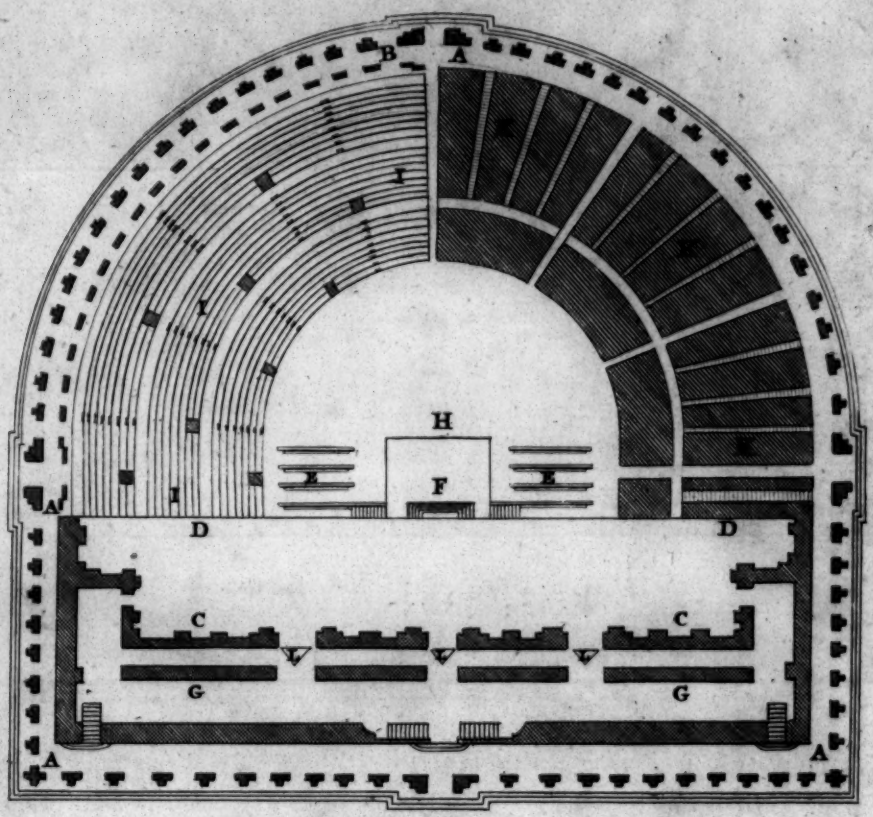
PLAN of a GREEK THEATRE



A. *Lower Portico*
B. *Upper or third Portico*
C. *The Scene*
D. *The Proſcenium*
E. *The Hypoſcenium*
F. *The Thymele*
G. *The Paraſcenium*
H. *The Orchestra*
I. *The Seats*
K. *The Stair-cases*
L. *Triangular Machines for the Scenery*

John Bell//e
11705. f. 8. 55

THE TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES,

FROM THE GREEK.

BY THOMAS FRANCKLIN, D.D.
GREEK PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

A NEW EDITION.

WITH A
DISSERTATION ON ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY,
AND A
PLAN OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GREEK THEATRE,

LONDON:
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M,DCC,XCIII.

TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCE OF WALES:

May it pleaſe your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

ANTIENT TRAGEDY, in its pure and perfect ſtate, was made ſubſervient only to the nobleſt purpoſes, and ſacred to truth, religion and virtue. This ſpecies of the drama attained to its higheſt degree of perfection in the time, and under the direction, of the immortal Sophocles, the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his cotemporaries, and, in a word, the Shakeſpear of antiquity.

SUCH is the work, and ſuch the author, which I have the honour to preſent to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. That a writer ſo univerſally applauded, ſhould never yet have been ſeen in an Engliſh habit (for the diſguiſes, which he has hitherto worn, are not worthy of that name) is certainly a matter of aſtoniſhment; but Sophocles ſeems purpoſely to have waited for the preſent happy opportunity of making his firſt appearance amongſt us, under the patronage of your ROYAL HIGHNESS; a circumſtance which has made him ample retribution for all our former ſlight and neglect of him. The author of the following ſheets, though conſcious of his own inabilities, and the difficulty of the taſk which he has

undertaken, approaches your ROYAL HIGHNESS with confidence, as ſatisfied that the ſame kindneſs and humanity, which induced your ROYAL HIGHNESS to accept theſe volumes, will alſo pardon their errors and imperfections; and at the ſame time flatters himſelf, that the reſt of his readers will pay ſome deference to ſo illuſtrious an example.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS will pardon me, if, with my warmeſt acknowledgments on this occaſion, I take the liberty to mingle my hearty congratulations on this day's ſolemnity: the world of letters, and the circle of arts and ſciences, have a peculiar intereſt in every thing that concerns their patron and protector: permit me, therefore, in their name, to wiſh your ROYAL HIGHNESS that health, happineſs and proſperity, on which their own muſt in a great meaſure depend: permit me to wiſh, that Britain, under your ROYAL HIGHNESS's influence, may become the darling ſeat of taſte and genius, the throne of literature, and the conſtant reſidence of honour, freedom, piety, and virtue: this, may it pleaſe your ROYAL HIGHNESS, is the wiſh, this is the well-founded hope, of all, and of none more truly, firmly, and ſincerely, than,

May it pleaſe your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

Moſt devoted, obliged,

And obedient ſervant,

THOMAS FRANCKLIN.

June 4th, 1759.



A DISSERTATION ON ANTIENT TRAGEDY.

WHILST the taſte, genius, and knowledge of the antients, have been univerſally felt and acknowledged in every other part of polite literature, it is matter of admiration to conſider, that the Greek Theatre ſhould ſo long have remained in neglect and obſcurity. In philoſophy, morals, oratory, and heroic poetry, in every art and ſcience, we look back to Greece, as the ſtandard and model of perfection: the ruins of Athens afford, even to this day, freſh pleaſure and delight; and nothing but her ſtage ſeems to be forgotten by us. Homer, Xenophon, Demoſthenes, and many other eminent Greek writers, have of late years put on an Engliſh habit, and gained admiſſion even into what is called polite company; whilſt Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, ſtill lurk in ſchools and colleges; and very ſeldom make their appearance, at leaſt with dirty leaves, in the libraries of the great. To what ſhall we attribute a judgment ſo capricious and ſo unaccountable? partly, perhaps, to the haſty ſeverity of ignorant foes, and partly to the outrageous zeal of * miſtaken friendſhip. The fate of Antient Tragedy hath, indeed, been ſingularly unfortunate: ſome painters have drawn too flattering a likeneſs of her; whilſt others, have preſented us with nothing but a caricature; ſome exalt the Greek drama, as the moſt perfect of all human compoſi-

* The remarks which are handed down to us on Antient Tragedy, have hitherto, for the moſt part, conſiſted of mere verbal criticiſms, various readings, or general and trite exclamations of undiſtinguiſhing applauſe, made by dull and phlegmatic commentators, totally void of taſte and judgment: add to this, that the old tragedians have been ſhamefully diſguiſed and miſrepreſented to the unlearned by the falſe medium of bad tranſlations.

tions, without the leaſt ſpot or blemiſh; whilſt others affect to call it the infant ſtate of the ſtage, weak, infirm, and imperfect; and as ſuch, treat it with the higheſt degree of negligence and contempt: exaggerated thus on the one hand by the extravagant encomiums of injudicious learning, and debaſed on the other by the raſh cenſures of modern petulance, its real and intrinſic merit hath never been thoroughly known, or candidly inquired into: the beſt method, however, in this, as in every other diſputed point, is to ſet aſide all prejudice and authority, and determine the cauſe by our own reaſon and judgment, from a fair, full, and impartial view of it.

THAT the ſpectator may be able to form a proper and complete idea of any object preſented to him, it is neceſſary to place him in ſuch a ſituation, that his eye may at once comprehend the whole, and every part of it; for this purpoſe, I have collected and ranged in order a few materials, which, in the hands of ſome abler writer, may poſſibly lay the foundation for a complete hiſtory of the Antient Drama; in the mean time, the following ſheets confine themſelves to, and pretend to no more than, a brief account of the origin and progreſs of the Greek Tragedy; its end and purport, the ſeveral parts, properties, and conduct of it; the conſtruction, ſcenery, and decorations of the theatre; to which is added, a tranſient, but neceſſary, view of the genius, character, and ſituation, religion, morals and politics of the people, before whom it was repreſented; together with a ſhort ſketch of the lives and characters of the three great tragedians.



ON THE ORIGIN OF TRAGEDY.

NOTHING is more agreeable to the inquiſitive mind, than to trace the gradual improvement of any art or ſcience; to mark the cauſes of its growth and culture, and purſue it through its various ſtages of perfection: it is much to be lamented, therefore, that neither Ariſtotle nor any other writer on Antient Tragedy, hath given us an exact or regular account of its progreſs and advancement, from the time of its birth to that of its maturity and ſplendor; the few ſcattered anecdotes, which remain concerning it, rather ſerving to awaken our curioſity, than to afford us any full and ſatisfactory information.

TRAGEDY was, in its infancy, like every other production of human art, extremely weak, low, and contemptible: that wide and deep ſtream, which flows with ſuch ſtrength and rapidity through cultivated Greece, took its riſe from a ſmall and inconſiderable fountain, which hides itſelf in the receſſes of antiquity, and is almoſt buried in oblivion: the name alone remains to give us ſome light into its original nature, and to inform us, that Tragedy, like every other ſpecies of poetry, owed its birth to religion.

TRAGEDY, or the * ſong of the goat, was only a ſacred hymn. Bacchus, we are told, the firſt cultivator of vines, imparted

* From Τραγος, a goat, and ωδη, a ſong. The commentators, not content with this moſt natural and obvious interpretation, have given us ſeveral others. Some of them turn Τραγωδια into Τρυγωδια, and ſo derive it from Τρυξ, the lees of wine, with which we are told the actors ſmeared their faces: others inform us, that Τρυξ ſignifies new wine, a ſkin of which was, it ſeems, uſually given to the poet (like the butt of ſack to our laureats) as a re-

imparted his ſecret to a petty prince in Attica, named Icarius, who, happening one day to eſpy a goat, browzing on his plantations, immediately ſeized and offered him up as a ſacrifice to his divine benefactor: the peaſants aſſembled round their maſter, aſſiſted in the ceremony, and expreſſed their joy and gratitude, in ſongs and dances on the occaſion; the † ſacrifice grew into a feſtival, and the feſtival into an annual ſolemnity, attended moſt probably every year with additional circumſtances, when the countrymen flocked together in crowds, and ſung in ruſtic ſtrains the praiſes of their favourite deity. The rural ſacrifice became, in proceſs of time, a ſolemn feaſt, and aſſumed all the pomp and ſplendor of a religious ceremony; poets were employed by the magiſtrate to compoſe hymns or ſongs for the occaſion: ſuch was the rudeneſs and ſimplicity of the age, that their bards contended for a prize, which, as ‡ Horace intimates, was ſcarce worth contending

ward for his labours: but I ſhall not trouble my reader with the enumeration of their whimſical conjectures.

† This ſtory is told by Brumoy, and by twenty others, with little variation. It ſeems, notwithſtanding, to carry with it the air of a fiction, ſo far as it regards Icarius, who ſeems only to have been introduced becauſe Icaria was famous for vines, and (as Spon tells us in his voyage to Italy) was the firſt place where they ſacrificed a goat to Bacchus, and alſo, where tragedies and comedies were firſt exhibited; but ſurely the ſong of the goat might be accounted for, without application to any particular perſon. Bacchus, being the acknowledged inventor and cultivator of the vine, it was moſt natural that the firſt planters ſhould ſacrifice to him, the deſtroyers of it; the goat being a creature as remarkably fond of the leaves of the vine, as his ſacrificer was of the juice of the grape; we ſhall find that he fell a victim not to Bacchus alone; and that the poet, as well as the god, came in for a ſhare of him.

‡ Vilem certavit ob hircum. Art. Poet.

tending for; being no more than a goat or ſkin of wine, which was given to the happy poet, who acquitted himſelf beſt in the taſk aſſigned to him.

THIS was probably the period when Theſpis firſt pointed out the tragic path, by his introduction of a new perſonage, who relieved the chorus or troop of ſingers, by reciting part of ſome well-known hiſtory or fable, which gave time for the chorus to reſt. All that the actor § repeated between the ſongs of the chorus, was called an epiſode or additional part; conſiſting often of different adventures which had no connection with each other. Thus the chorus, or ſong, which was at firſt the only, and afterwards the principal, performance, became gradually and inſenſibly but an inconſiderable, though, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, a neceſſary and ornamental part of the drama.

FROM this time, we may imagine, the actor or reciter was more attended to than the chorus; however his part was executed, it had the powerful charms of novelty to recommend it, and quickly obſcured the luſtre of the chorus, whoſe ſongs were now of a different nature, inſomuch, that the original ſubject of them, the praiſe of Bacchus, was by degrees either ſlightly mentioned, or totally paſſed over and forgotten: the prieſts, who, we may ſuppoſe, for a long time preſided over the whole, were alarmed at ſo open a contempt of the deity, and unanimouſly exclaimed, that all this ‖ was nothing to Bacchus; the complaint grew into a kind of proverbial ſaying, and as ſuch is handed down to us.

FROM

§ When Tragedy aſſumed a regular form, theſe recitations which, during its imperfect ſtate, were only adventitious ornaments, became the principle and conſtituent parts of the drama; the ſubject of them, drawn from one and the ſame, action, retaining their firſt name of epiſode.

‖ ουδεν προς Διονυσον.

FROM the origin of tragedy, to the days of Theſpis, and from his time to that of Æſchylus, all is doubt, conjecture, and obſcurity; neither Ariſtotle, nor any other antient writer, give us the leaſt inſight into the ſtate and progreſs of the Greek drama: if his treatiſe called * Διδασκαλιαι had reached poſterity, it would probably have afforded us much pleaſure and inſtruction: the names of a few, and but a few, tragedians, during this dark period, are handed down to us: ſuch were † Epigenes, the Sicyonian, and Pratinas, who wrote fifty plays, thirty-two of which are ſaid to have been ſatyrical: after Theſpis, came his ſcholar Phrynicus, who wrote nine tragedies, for ‡ one of which, we are told, he was fined fifty drachmas, becauſe he had made it (an odd reaſon) too deep, and too affecting: there was alſo another Phrynicus, author of ‖ two tragedies; to theſe we muſt add § Alcæus, Phormus, and ¶ Chœrilus; together with Cephiſodorus, an Athenian, who wrote the Amazons, and Apollophanes, ſuppoſed to have been the author of a tragedy, named Daulis; though Suidas is of another opinion.

TRAGEDY, during the lives of theſe writers, had in all probability made but a ſlow progreſs, and received very little culture or improvement, when at length the great Æſchylus aroſe, who, from this rude and undigeſted chaos, created as it were a new world in the ſyſtem of letters. Poets, and even epic

* This treatiſe contained an exact account of the names, times, and authors of all the plays that were ever acted.

† The Bacchæ, a tragedy of his, is cited by Athenæus.

‡ See Strabo, Heroditus, and Plutarch.

‖ Called Andromeda and Erigone.

§ Mentioned by Macrobius and Pollux.

¶ Chœrilus is ſaid to have written no leſs than a hundred and twenty tragedies.

epic poets, there might perhaps have been before Homer; dramatic writers there certainly were before Æſchylus; the former, notwithſtanding, we may with the utmoſt propriety ſtile the inventor and father of heroic poetry; and the latter, of the antient drama; which, before his time, doth not appear to have had any form, ſhape, or beauty. He firſt introduced dialogue, that moſt eſſential part of tragedy, by the addition of a ſecond perſonage, threw the whole fable into action, and reſtored the chorus to its antient dignity.

Æschylus, having, like a tender parent, endowed his darling child with every mental accompliſhment, ſeemed reſolved that no external ornaments ſhould be wanting to render her univerſally amiable; he cloathed her, therefore, in the moſt ſplendid habit, and beſtowed on her every thing that art could procure to heighten and improve her charms. We know, from good authority, that fifty years before his time, Theſpis exhibited his rude performances in a cart, and beſmeared the faces of his actors with the lees of wine, probably to diſguiſe their perſons, and give them the appearance of thoſe whom they repreſented; but Æſchylus, who, being himſelf author, actor, and manager, took upon him the whole conduct of the drama, did not neglect any part of it; he improved the ſcenery and decorations, brought his actors into a regular and well-conſtructed theatre, raiſed his heroes on the cothurnus or buſkin, invented the maſques, and introduced ſplendid * habits with long trains, that gave an air of majeſty and dignity to the performers.

From the time when tragedy began to aſſume a regular form, we find her cloſely following the ſteps of epic poetry; all

* Perſonæ, pallæque repertor honeſtæ
Æſchylus, & modicis inſtravit pulpita tignis,
Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno. Hor.

all the parts of the epopée, or heroic poem, may be traced in tragedy, though, as Ariſtotle obſerves, all the parts of tragedy are not to be found in the epopée; whence the partiſans of the ſtage, with ſome reaſon, conclude, that perfection in the former is more difficult to be attained than in the latter. Without entering into this diſpute, we may venture, however, to ſtile † Homer the ſource and fountain of the antient drama; from him the tragedians drew the plan, conſtruction, and conduct of their fables, and not unfrequently the fable itſelf; to him they applied for propriety of manners, character, ſentiment, and diction.

FROM this æra, then, we are to conſider tragedy as an elegant and noble ſtructure, built according to the rules of art, ſymmetry, and proportion; whoſe every part was in itſelf fair, firm, and compact, and at the ſame time contributed to the beauty, uſefulneſs and duration of the whole edifice. Sophocles and Euripides carefully ſtudied the plan laid down by Æſchylus, and by their ſuperior genius and judgment improved it in a ſhort time to its higheſt ſtate of perfection, from which it gradually declined to the introduction of the Roman drama.

ON

† Homer, ſays Ariſtotle, was the firſt, who μιμησεις δραματικας ἐποιησε, invented dramatic imitations. 'There was no more left 'for tragedy (ſays Lord Shaftſbury) than to erect a ſtage, 'and draw his dialogues and characters into ſcenes, turning in 'the ſame manner upon one principal action or event, with re-'gard to place and time; which was ſuitable to a real ſpectacle.'

See Characteriſt. vol. 2.

ON THE PARTS OF ANTIENT TRAGEDY.

AMONGST many other erroneous opinions concerning the Greek tragedy, adopted by modern editors and commentators, the unwarrantable diviſion, which they have made of it into * acts, is perhaps the moſt remarkable, as there doth not ſeem to be the leaſt ground or foundation for it: in the firſt place, neither Athenæus, nor any of the antient writers, who have given us quotations from the Greek plays, mention the act where the ſeveral paſſages are to be found; which they would moſt naturally have done, had any ſuch diviſion ever taken place. It may be likewiſe obſerved, that the word † Act does not once occur in that treatiſe of Ariſtotle, which gives us ſo exact a definition of every part of the Greek drama; add to this, that the tragedies themſelves carry with them ſufficient proof that no ſuch thing was ever thought on by the authors of them; notwithſtanding which, ‡ Voſſius, Barnes, and ſeveral other editors, have diſcovered an office of the chorus, which the poet never aſſigned them, namely, their uſe in dividing the acts, the intervals of which were ſupplied by their ſongs; though it is evident that the buſineſs of the chorus (as will ſufficiently appear in the following account of it) was, on the other hand, to prevent any ſuch unnatural pauſe or vacancy in the drama, as the diviſion into acts muſt neceſſarily produce; beſides that, if we take the word act in that ſenſe which

* See a diſſertation on this ſubject, by Monſ. Vatry, in the hiſt. de l'acad. vol. 8, p. 188.

|| The word δραμα, which we tranſlate an act, ſignifies the whole performance, or drama, and could not poſſibly, therefore, mean any one particular part of it.

‡ Chorus, ſays Voſſius, pars fabulæ poſt actum, vel inter actum & actum. See inſt. poet. l. 2.

which the modern uſe of it demands, we ſhall find it in the Greek tragedies compoſed ſometimes of a ſingle ſcene, and ſometimes of half a dozen; and ‖ if the ſongs or intermedes of the chorus are to determine the number of acts, the play will conſiſt not always of five, according to our own cuſtom, but at one time of only three, and at another of ſeven or eight. § Horace has indeed, told us that there ſhould be but five acts; but it does not from thence follow, that it always was ſo: the truth after all is, that this miſtake, as well as many others, aroſe from an error common to almoſt the whole race of writers and critics on antient tragedy, who have unanimouſly agreed to confound the Greek and Roman drama, concluding them both to be governed by the ſame laws, though they are in many parts eſſentially different: they never allow for the time between Ariſtotle and Horace, but leap from one to the other with the utmoſt agility: it is plain,

‖ On looking into the choruſſes of Sophocles as they ſtand in the original, we find that the Ajax, beſides the κομμοι (which will be explained hereafter) has five, which are thus unequally divided; to the firſt act two; the ſecond one; the third one; the fourth one; the fifth none at all: the Trachiniæ has ſix; the Electra but three; and the Philoctetes but one regular ſong or intermede in the whole play. If it be granted, therefore, as I think it is on all hands, that wherever we meet with ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, and there only, we are to conceive that the chorus ſung, nothing can be more abſurd than to make thoſe ſongs dividers of the acts, when it is evident that the chorus ſung only as occaſion offered, and the circumſtances of the drama required, which accounts for the irregularity and difference in the numbers of them. If the reader will take the trouble to examine the antient tragedies, he will find what I have ſaid confirmed in every one of them.

§ Neve minor, neu ſit quinto productior actu.

plain, however, from * the reaſons here mentioned, that the antient Greek tragedy was one continued repreſentation from beginning to end.

THE diviſion into acts, therefore, is undoubtedly a piece of modern refinement; which, as much may be ſaid on both ſides, I ſhall not ſtop either to condemn or approve, but proceed to the only diviſion which the antients ever made; a diviſion, which nature points out to this and every other compoſition, viz. a † beginning, a middle, and an end; or, in the words of Ariſtotle, the prologue, the epiſode, and the exode.

THE PROLOGUE of antient tragedy, was not unlike the προαυλιον or overture in muſic, or the procemium in oratory, containing all that part of the drama, which ‡ preceded the firſt ſong, or intermede of the chorus.

WHAT

* Many other reaſons equally forcible might be alledged, ſome of which the reader will find ſcattered about in the notes to my tranſlation of Sophocles. I ſhall only obſerve here, that the old editions of the Greek tragedies, ſo far from dividing them into acts, do not ſo much as make the leaſt ſeparation of the ſcenes; even the names of the perſons are not always properly affixed to the ſpeeches: no notice is taken of the entrances and exits of the actors; the aſides are never marked, nor any of the geſtures or actions, which frequently occur, pointed out to us in the margin; defects which, however inconſiderable, may miſlead the young and injudicious reader, and which ought, therefore, to be carefully ſupplied by the critic or tranſlator.

† The cauſe and deſign of undertaking any action are, the beginning; the effects of thoſe cauſes, and the difficulties we find in the execution of that deſign, are, the middle; the unravelling and reſolving thoſe difficulties are, the end.

See Boſſu's treatiſe on epic poetry.

‡ Ariſtotle muſt certainly be underſtood to mean not the firſt entrance, but the firſt ſong or intermede of the chorus; becauſe, as

WHAT Ariſtotle calls the prologue, ſhould contain, according to the antient critics, all thoſe circumſtances which are neceſſary to be known for the better underſtanding and comprehenſion of the whole drama, as, the place of the ſcene, the time when the action commences, the names and characters of the perſons concerned, together with ſuch an inſight into the plot as might awaken the curioſity of the ſpectator, without letting him too far into the deſign and conduct of it. This, however eaſy it may ſeem at firſt view, is ſo difficult, that it has ſcarce ever been performed to any degree of perfection. Of the Greek tragedians, Sophocles alone ſeems to have ſucceeded in this particular, the prologues of ‖ Æſchylus being quite rude and inartificial, and thoſe of Euripides for the moſt part tedious and confuſed.

THE EPISODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is between the ſongs or intermedes of the chorus: this anſwers to our ſecond, third, and fourth act, and comprehends all the intrigue or plot to the unravelling or cataſtrophe, which in

Dacier and other writers have obſerved, there are tragedies (as the Perſæ and Suppliants of Æſchylus) where the chorus enters firſt on the ſtage, and opens the play: to ſuch, therefore, if Ariſtotle meant the ſpeaking and not the ſong, there would be no prologue; a contradiction which is avoided by underſtanding what is here ſaid of the παροδος, or firſt ſong, which never begins till the prologue is over, and matter furniſhed to the chorus for the intermede.

‖ According to this rule, the prologues of Æſchylus and Euripides will by no means ſtand the teſt of examination; that part of the tragedy, which precedes the firſt ſong of the chorus, being often employed, by thoſe writers, either in abſurd addreſſes to the ſpectators, or in the relation of things extremely foreign to the purpoſe of the drama, frequently anticipating the incidents and circumſtances of the play, and even ſometimes acquainting the audience before-hand with the cataſtrophe; all of them capital errors, which the ſuperior judgment of Sophocles taught him carefully to avoid.

in the § beſt antient writers is not made till after the laſt ſong of the chorus; the conduct and diſpoſition of the epiſode may be conſidered as the ſureſt teſt of the poet's abilities, as it generally determines the merit, and decides the fate, of the drama. Here all the art of the writer is neceſſary to ſtop the otherwiſe too rapid progreſs of his fable, by the intervention of ſome * new circumſtance that involves the perſons concerned in freſh difficulties, awakens the attention of the ſpectators, and leads them as it were inſenſibly to the moſt natural concluſion and unravelling of the whole.

THE EXODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is recited after the chorus has left off ſinging; it anſwers to our fifth act, and contains the unravelling, or cataſtrophe of the piece; after which, it is remarked by the critics, any ſong of the chorus would only be tedious and unneceſſary, becauſe what is ſaid, when the action is finiſhed, cannot be too ſhort.

§ Sophocles, who was certainly the moſt correct of the three great tragedians, has, I think, obſerved this rule in all his plays but two, viz. Ajax and Œdipus Tyrannus; for, if the death of Ajax is the cataſtrophe of that tragedy, it is over long before the laſt ſong of the chorus; if the leave granted to bury him be the cataſtrophe, as ſome critics contend, the epiſode is confined within its proper limits: but this cannot be allowed without attributing to this piece what is a ſtill greater blemiſh, a duplicity of action; a dramatic crime, of which Sophocles in that play I am afraid cannot eaſily be acquitted. In the Œdipus Tyrannus it is obſervable, that the total diſcovery of Œdipus's guilt is made before the laſt ſong of the chorus, and becomes the ſubject of the intermede.

* Brumoy compares the fable of a good tragedy to a large and beautiful temple, which the ſkill of the architect hath ſo contrived as to make it appear at firſt view of much leſs extent than it really is, wherein the farther you advance, the more you are ſurpriſed at the vaſt intervening ſpace, which the extraordinary ſymmetry and proportion of its parts had concealed from the eye.

ON THE CHORUS.

WE come now to an eſſential * part of antient tragedy peculiar to itſelf: whilſt every other member of the building is univerſally admired, and induſtriouſly copied by modern architects, this alone hath been rejected and contemned as ungraceful and unneceſſary. The chorus, as I before obſerved, gave the firſt hint to the formation of tragedy, and was, as it were, the corner-ſtone of the whole edifice: as a religious ceremony, it was conſidered by the multitude with a kind of ſuperſtitious veneration; it is not therefore improbable that the firſt authors of the regular drama willingly gave way to popular prejudices, and for this, among many other reaſons, incorporated it into the body of the tragedy: accordingly, we find the chorus of Æſchylus reſuming its original office, reciting the praiſes of the local deities, demi-gods, and heroes, taking the part of diſtreſſed virtue, and abounding throughout in all thoſe moral precepts, and religious ſentiments, by which the writings of the antients are ſo eminently and ſo honourably diſtinguiſhed.

VARIOUS are the arguments that have from time to time been produced by the zealous partizans of antiquity, in favour of the tragic chorus, the principal of which I ſhall briefly recapitulate and lay before my readers, begging leave, at the ſame time, to premiſe, that whether a chorus is defenſible with regard to the antient theatre, and whether it ſhould be adopted by the modern, are two very different queſtions, though generally blended and confuſed by writers on this ſubject; the former may perhaps be eaſily proved, though the latter be left totally undetermined. The antients thought it

* Ariſtotle ranks the chorus amongſt, what he calls, parts of quantity, and places it after the exode.

it highly improbable that any great, intereſting, and important action ſhould be performed without witneſſes; their choruſſes were therefore compoſed of † ſuch perſons as moſt naturally might be ſuppoſed preſent on the occaſion; ‡ perſons, whoſe ſituation might ſo far intereſt them in the events of the fable, as to render their preſence uſeful and neceſſary; and yet not ſo deeply concerned as to make them incapable of performing that office, to which they were more particularly appointed, the giving proper advice, and making proper reflections on every thing that occurred, in the courſe of the drama; for this purpoſe, a choriphæus, or leader, ſuperintended and directed all the reſt, ſpoke for the whole body in the dialogue part, and led the ſongs and dances in the intermede. By the introduction of a chorus, which bore a part in the action, the antients avoided the abſurdity of monologues and ſoliloquies, an error, which the morderns have

† 'A chorus, interpoſing and bearing a part in the progreſs of 'the action, gives the repreſentation that probability and ſtriking 'reſemblance of real life, which every man of ſenſe perceives, and 'feels the want of, upon our ſtage; a want, which nothing but 'ſuch an expedient as the chorus can poſſibly relieve.'

This is the remark of one of the moſt ingenious and judicious critics, which our own age, or perhaps any other, ever produced: the reader will find it, with many others equally juſt, p. 118. of the firſt volume of a commentary and notes on Horace's art of poetry, and epiſtle to Auguſtus.

‡ Thus, in the Ajax of Sophocles, the chorus is compoſed of the men of Salamis, his countrymen, and companions; in the Electra, of the principal ladies of Mycenæ, her friends and attendants; in the Philoctetes, of the companions of Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus, the only perſons who could with any propriety be introduced. The reſt of this writer's plays, and his only, will ſtand the teſt of examination by the rule here mentioned.

imperceptibly and neceſſarily fallen into, from their omiſſion of it: they avoided alſo that miſerable reſource of diſtreſſed poets, the inſipid and unintereſting race of confidents (a refinement, for which we are indebted to the French theatre) who only appear to aſk a fooliſh queſtion, liſten to the ſecrets of their ſuperiors, and laugh or cry as they are commanded.

But the great uſe and advantage of the chorus will beſt appear, when we come to conſider it in its moral capacity. In that illuſtrious period, which may be called the golden age of tragedy, the ſtage was not only the principal, but almoſt the only, vehicle of inſtruction. Philoſophy applied to the liberal arts for their influence and aſſiſtance; ſhe appeared in the theatre even before ſhe dictated in the academy, and Socrates is ſuppoſed to have delivered many of his excellent precepts, by the mouth of his ‖ favourite poet: this ſufficiently accounts for the ſententious and didactic part of the antient drama; for all that profuſion of moral and religious ſentiments, which tires the patience, and diſguſts the delicacy, of modern readers: the critics of thoſe times were of opinion (however they may differ from our own in this particular) that the firſt and principal characters of the piece were too deeply intereſted in their own concerns, and too buſy in the proſecution of their ſeveral deſigns and purpoſes, to be at leiſure to make moral or political reflections: ſuch, therefore,

‖ Hence Euripides was called 'ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς φιλόσοφος,' 'the philoſopher of the theatre,' 'in iis (ſays Quintilian) quæ a 'ſapientibus tradita ſunt, ipſis pæne par.' With regard to Socrates, his friendſhip with this poet is univerſally known, 'ἐδόκει 'συμποιεῖν Εὐριπίδῃ,' ſays Diogenes Laertius. The comic poets of that time did not ſcruple to aſcribe ſeveral of Euripides's plays to Socrates, as they afterwards did thoſe of Terence to Lælius and Scipio.

therefore, they very judiciouſly for the moſt part put into the mouth of the chorus; this, at the ſame time, § prevented the illiterate, and undiſtinguiſhing part of the audience, from miſtaking the characters, or drawing haſty and falſe concluſions from the incidents and circumſtances of the drama: the poet by theſe means leading them as it were inſenſibly into ſuch ſentiments and affections as he had intended to excite, and a conviction of thoſe moral and religious truths which he meant to inculcate.

But the chorus had likewiſe another * office, which was, to relieve the ſpectator, during the pauſes and intervals of the action, by an ode or ſong adapted to the occaſion, naturally

§ Euripides being obliged to put ſome bold and impious ſentiments into the mouth of a wicked character, the audience were angry with the poet, and looked upon him as the real villain, whom his actor repreſented: the ſtory is told by Seneca. 'Now if ſuch 'an audience (ſays the ingenious writer, whom I quoted above) 'could ſo eaſily miſinterpret an attention to the truth of character 'into the real doctrine of the poet, and this too, when a chorus 'was at hand to correct and diſabuſe their judgments, what muſt 'be the caſe when the whole is left to the ſagacity and penetration 'of the people?'

* The office of the chorus is divided by Ariſtotle into three parts, which he calls παραδος, ςασιμον, and κομμοι; the parados is the firſt ſong of the chorus; the ſtaſimon is all that which the chorus ſings after it has taken poſſeſſion of the ſtage, and is incorporated into the action; and the commoi are thoſe lamentations ſo frequent in the Greek writers, which the chorus and the actors make together. See the ſecond ſcene of the ſecond act of Ajax, in my tranſlation; Philoctetes, act firſt, ſcene third; the beginning of the Œdipus Coloneus, together with many other parts of Sophocles's tragedies, where the commoi are eaſily diſtinguiſhable from the regular ſongs of the chorus.

rally ariſing from the incidents, and † connected with the ſubject of the drama: here the author generally gave a looſe to his imagination, diſplayed his poetical abilities, and ſometimes, perhaps too often, wandered from the ſcene of action into the regions of fancy; the audience notwithſtanding were pleaſed with this ſhort relaxation, and agreeable variety; ſoothed by the power of numbers, and the excellency of the compoſition, they eaſily forgave the writer, and returned as it were with double attention to his proſecution of the main ſubject: to this part of the antient chorus we are indebted for ſome of the nobleſt flights of poetry, as well as the fineſt ſentiments that adorn the writings of the Greek tragedians. The number of perſons compoſing the chorus was probably at firſt indeterminate, varying according to the circumſtances and plot of the drama. Æſchylus, we are told, brought no leſs than fifty into his ‡ Eumenides, but was obliged to reduce them to twelve; Sophocles was afterwards permitted to add three; a limitation, which we have reaſon to imagine became a rule to ſucceeding poets.

When the chorus conſiſted of fifteen, the perſons compoſing it ranged themſelves in three rows of five each, or five

† Neu quid medios intercinat actus
Quod non propoſito conducat & hæreat apte. Hor.

This connection with the ſubject of the drama, ſo eſſentially neceſſary to a good chorus, is not always to be found in the tragedies of Æſchylus and Euripides, the latter of which is greatly blamed by Ariſtotle for his careleſſneſs in this important particular; the correct Sophocles alone hath ſtrictly obſerved it.

‡ In the Eumenides of Æſchylus, the chorus conſiſted of fifty furies, whoſe habits, geſture, and whole appearance was by the art of the poet rendered ſo formidable, as to frighten the whole audience; an accident which ſo alarmed the public, that a decree was immediately iſſued to limit the number of the chorus.

five rows of three; and in this order advanced or retreated from the right-hand to the left, which is called ‖ ſtrophe, and then back from the left to the right, which we call antiſtrophe; after which they ſtood ſtill in the midſt of the ſtage, and ſung the epode. § Some writers attribute the original of theſe evolutions to a myſterious imitation of the motion of the heavens, ſtars, and planets, but the conjecture ſeems rather whimſical. The dance, we may imagine, (if ſo we may venture to call it) was ſlow and ſolemn, or quick and lively, according to the words, ſentiments, and occaſion; and, in ſo ſpacious a theatre as that of Athens, might admit of ſuch grace and variety in its motions, as would render it extremely agreeable to the ſpectators: the petulancy of modern criticiſm has frequently made bold to ridicule the uſe of ſong and dance in antient tragedy, not conſidering (as Brumoy obſerves) that dancing is, in reality, only a more graceful way of moving, and muſic but a more agreeable manner of expreſſion; nor, indeed, can any good reaſon be aſſigned why they ſhould not be admitted, if properly

‖ It doth not appear that the old tragedians confined themſelves to any ſtrict rules, with regard to the diviſion of ſtrophe, antiſtrophe, and epode, as we find the choral ſongs conſiſting ſometimes of a ſtrophe only, ſometimes of ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, without the epode; the obſerving reader will find many other irregularities of this kind in a peruſal of the Greek tragedies.

§ 'Le Chœur (ſays Brumoy) alloit de droit à gauche, pour ex-
'primer le cours journalier du firmament d'orient en occident, ce
'tour s'appelloit ſtrophe; il declinoit enſuite de gauche à droite,
'par égard aux planettes, qui outre le mouvement commun ont
'encore le leur particulier d'occident vers l'orient, c'etoit l'anti-
'ſtrophe, ou le retour; enfin le chœur s'arretoit au milieu du
'théâtre pour y chanter un morceau qu'on nommoit epode, & pour
'marquer par cette ſituation la ſtabilité de la terre.'

introduced and carefully managed, into the moſt ſerious compoſitions. To ſay the truth, nothing is more aſtoniſhing than the prejudices we entertain, and the partiality we ſhew, with regard to our own modes and cuſtoms: we condemn the choruſſes of the antients, which ſupplied with decency and propriety the vacant parts of the drama; and how do we fill up our own? To be convinced of our injuſtice and abſurdity, let us ſuppoſe Sophocles, or Euripides, tranſported from the ſhades of elyſium, and entering one of our noiſy theatres, between the acts; the audience engaged in bowing or talking to each other, and the muſic entertaining them with a jig of Vivaldi, or the roaſt beef of old England, how would they be ſurpriſed in a few minutes to find that all this diſorder, riot, and confuſion, was in the midſt of a moſt pathetic and intereſting tragedy, and that the warmeſt paſſions of the human heart were broken in upon and enfeebled by this ſtrange and unnatural interruption.

THE chorus continued on the ſtage during the whole repreſentation of the piece, unleſs when ſome very * extraordinary circumſtance required their abſence; this obliged the poet to a continuity of action, as the chorus could not have any excuſe for remaining on the ſpot, when the affair, which called them together, was at an end; it preſerved alſo the unity of time; for if the poet, as † Hedelin obſerves, had compre-

* As in the Ajax of Sophocles, where the chorus leave the ſtage in ſearch of that hero, and by that means give him an opportunity of killing himſelf in the very ſpot which they had quitted, and which could not have been done with any propriety whilſt they were preſent, and able to prevent it: on theſe occaſions, the chorus frequently divided itſelf into two parts, or ſemichoruſſes, and ſung alternately.

† See his whole art of the ſtage, page 129, of the Engliſh tranſlation.

comprehended in his play a week, a month, or a year, how could the ſpectators be made to believe, that the people, who were before them, could have paſſed ſo long a time without eating, drinking, or ſleeping? Thus we find that the chorus preſerved all the unities of action, time, and place; that it prepared the incidents, and inculcated the moral of the piece; relieved and amuſed the ſpectators, preſided over and directed the muſic, made a part of the decoration, and, in ſhort, pervaded and animated the whole; it rendered the poem more regular, more probable, more pathetic, more noble and magnificent; it was indeed the great chain, which held together and ſtrengthened the ſeveral parts of the drama, which without it could only have exhibited a lifeleſs and unintereſting ſcene of irregularity, darkneſs, and confuſion.

The antient chorus, notwithſtanding, with all its advantages, is not agreeable to every taſte; it hath been attacked with great ſeverity, and treated with the utmoſt contempt; it hath been called arrant pedantry, an excreſcency of the drama, a mob of confidents; even writers of approved genius and judgment have ſaid, that it is abſurd to imagine the antients would ever have truſted their ſecrets, eſpecially thoſe of a criminal nature, to all their domeſtics; that it is impoſſible to imagine that fifty, or even fifteen, people can keep a ſecret, fifteen people of the ſame mind, thought, voice, and expreſſion.

It muſt be acknowledged, that theſe critics have ſelected that part of the office of the chorus, which is moſt liable to cenſure; but even if we allow the objection its full force, it will not ſuffice to condemn the chorus itſelf, which, in the judicious Sophocles, who avoided the errors and abſurdities of his cotemporaries, is unexceptionable: in that noble author, nothing is entruſted to the chorus, which ought to be concealed; nor any thing concealed, which ought to be imparted

parted to them; we might, therefore, perhaps, with equal juſtice, baniſh from our own ſtage, the general practice of ſoliloquies, becauſe Shakeſpear hath frequently drawn them out to an immoderate length, as utterly condemn the whole antient chorus, becauſe Euripides hath in two or three of his plays, made an improper uſe of it.

'Who ſhall decide, when doctors diſagree?'

Some applaud the chorus with a kind of enthuſiaſtic rapture, whilſt others endeavour to ſink it into univerſal contempt: for my own part, I cannot but think it abſolutely neceſſary on the antient ſtage, and that it might be rendered uſeful and ornamental, even on our own. I am, notwithſtanding, far from being of opinion, that it ſhould be admitted conſtantly and indiſcriminately into the modern theatre; the uſe of it muſt depend entirely on the ſubject: certain it is, that there are many in our own hiſtory, as well as in that of other nations, where a chorus might be introduced with the utmoſt propriety; but if, after all, faſhion and prejudice will not ſuffer them to appear on the ſtage, they may at leaſt gain admiſſion to the cloſet; thither let the reader of true taſte and judgment, carry Elfrida and Charactacus, written on the antient model, and compare them with any of thoſe tinſel, flimſy performances, that have lately aſſumed the name of tragedies, which have owed all their ſucceſs to the falſe taſte of the age, joined to the real merit of the actors in the repreſentation of them.

ON THE VERSE, RECITATION, AND MUSIC, OF ANTIENT TRAGEDY.

THE art of poetry was conſidered by the antients as a part of that general ſyſtem, which they termed the μελοποιια, or melody, and was in reality the art of making verſes proper to be ſung: they looked upon words, not only as ſigns of particular ideas, but as ſounds alſo, enabled by the aſſiſtance of muſic to expreſs all the paſſions of the human mind. When in the deſcriptive parts of the drama a dreadful or diſagreeable object was to be repreſented, the words were formed of ſuch harſh and jarring ſyllables, as by grating on the ear might beſt impreſs the exacteſt repreſentation of it; and in like manner, when the grand, the beautiful, or the tender, was to be ſet before the eyes of the ſpectator, the language was carefully and even painfully adapted to it. The Greeks, who were extremely ſolicitous to cultivate and improve their language to the higheſt degree of perfection, took more than ordinary care in the formation of their verſe; the quantity of every ſyllable was carefully aſcertained; different words, different dialects, and different feet, were appropriated to different ſpecies of poetry; and none infringed on the rights and privileges of another: tragedy, indeed, as the ſovereign, aſſumed a kind of peculiar title to them all; every ſpecies of verſe was occaſionally introduced to adorn and beautify the drama. The iambic was generally made uſe of in the body of the piece, as approaching, according to the judgment of Ariſtotle, neareſt to common diſcourſe, and, therefore, moſt naturally adapted to the dialogue; this rule, however, is not conſtantly and invariably obſerved, but ſometimes departed from with judgment; the metre is frequently changed, not only in the ſongs of the chorus,

chorus, but in other places, and that generally in the moſt intereſting and impaſſioned parts of the drama; where, it may here be obſerved, it is moſt probable that the muſic and inſtruments accompanying the verſe were changed alſo; a happy circumſtance for the poet, as it muſt have afforded an agreeable relief to the audience, who would naturally be fatigued by the repetition of the ſame ſounds, be they ever ſo harmonious. ‡ If our own times, manners, and taſte, would admit of ſuch variations, what additional beauties would they reflect on the Britiſh theatre! but ſuch a change of metre in ſerious dramatic performances, is rendered abſolutely impoſſible, as well from many other obſtacles, as from the ‖ poverty of our language, when put in compariſon with thoſe of antiquity; particularly that of Greece, whoſe ſuperiority over us in this reſpect is ſo remarkably viſible. On the antient ſtage, the length or ſhortneſs of every ſyllable was as it were fixed and determined, either by nature or by uſe;

‡ Since the expulſion of tragedies in rhyme, of all things doubtleſs the moſt abſurd, ſome of our beſt poets have introduced what is called a tag, conſiſting of three or four couplets, at the end of every act to relieve the ear from the monotony of blank verſe; but even this is now exploded, and we are confined to the repetition of the ſame continued metre, from beginning to end.

‖ 'It muſt be confeſſed, (ſays a very judicious writer) that all 'the modern languages fall infinitely ſhort of the antients in this 'point; both the Greek and Latin tongues aſſigned for the pro'nunciation of each ſyllable an exact meaſure of time, in ſome 'longer, in ſome ſhorter, and ſo variouſly intermixed thoſe two 'different meaſures in the ſame word, as furniſhed means for that 'variety of verſification, to which we are altogether ſtrangers.' See a book entituled, Obſervations on Poetry, printed for Dodſley in 1738, p. 108, in the chapter on verſification; where the reader will meet with many ſenſible remarks on this ſubject.

uſe; hence the ſong had a neceſſary and agreeable conformity with common diſcourſe, which rendered it more intelligible: our § muſicians, in the compoſition of their ſongs, make ſhort ſyllables long, and long ſhort, as it ſuits the air, or recitative; and whilſt the muſic pleaſes the ear, the words frequently offend it: if the poet and muſician were always united in one perſon, which very ſeldom happens, this inconvenience might, with all the diſadvantages of our language, be in a great meaſure leſſened, if not entirely removed.

IT is more than probable, and nearly demonſtrable, that the theatrical declamation of the antients was compoſed and written in notes, and that the whole play, from beginning to end, (except the commoi and choruſſes) were in a kind of *recitative like our modern operas; that it was †accompained

§ 'Our different cadences (ſays the elegant author of Elfrida), 'our diviſions, variations, repetitions, without which modern 'muſic cannot ſubſiſt, are entirely improper for the expreſſion of 'poetry, and were ſcarce known to the antients.'

* It is the opinion of P. Meneſtrier, and ſeveral other learned men, that the cuſtom of chaunting in churches was originally taken from the antient ſtage; as the theatres were open at the commencement of the chriſtian æra, it is not improbable, but that the common people might recite our Saviour's paſſion after the manner of the tragedians; certain however it is, that in our own nation, as well as in many others, the firſt tragedies exhibited were on religious ſubjects, and in ſome places continue ſo even to this day.

† The μελοποια, or melody, is mentioned by Ariſtotle, as one of the ſix eſſential parts of tragedy, and conſequently muſt have been conſidered by him not as confined to the chorus, but diffuſing itſelf through the whole drama. In the 19th chapter of his problems, he aſks, why the tragic choruſſes never ſing in the hypodotian, or hypophrygian mood, which are both employed in the

pained with muſic throughout, and that the reciter had little elſe to do, than carefully to obſerve the directions of the poet; the quantity of every word was aſcertained, the time, duration, and rythmus of every ſyllable fixed by the muſician, ſo that he could not eaſily miſtake or offend; the actor was not, as on our ſtage, left at liberty to murther fine ſentiment and language, by wrong accents and falſe pronunciation; by hurrying over ſome parts with precipitancy, and drawling out others into a tedious monotony; a good voice and a tolerable ear were all that the poet required of him.

MUSIC is ranked by Ariſtotle amongſt the eſſential parts of tragedy; nor is there the leaſt reaſon to doubt but that it was conſidered by the antients both as uſeful and ornamental: it was moſt probably diffuſed throughout the whole piece, accompanying the recitation in the dialogue, directing the voice, and even perhaps the ‡ action and geſture of the performers; varying its movements according to the different paſſions to be excited in the breaſts of the audience; its different meaſures were always carefully ‖ adapted

ſcenes; from which paſſage, as well as many others that might be quoted, it is evident that they ſung both in the ſcenes, or dialogue part, and in the chorus alſo.

‡ In the third volume of L'Abbé du Boſs's critical reflections on poetry, painting, and muſic; the whole eleventh chapter is employed in proving, or rather endeavouring to prove, that amongſt the Romans the theatrical declamation was divided between two actors, one of whom pronounced, whilſt the other executed the geſticulation.—I refer my readers to the book itſelf, where they will find many ingenious remarks on the theatrical repreſentations of the antients.

‖ St. Auſtin has written a treatiſe, expreſsly to reconcile the various meaſures of antient verſe with the principles of muſic.

adapted to the metre, and took their names from the different feet made uſe of in the verſe, as the dactylic, the ionic, pœonic, and the reſt; the principal exertion of its powers muſt, we may imagine, have been reſerved for the ſongs, or intermedes of the chorus, where both the poetry and muſic admitted of much greater freedom and variety than in the other parts of the drama: thus we ſee, in the Antient Theatre, muſic always accompanied her ſiſter ſcience, aſſiſted, animated, and ſupported her; was, in ſhort, in all reſpects, her friend and fellow-labourer.

Qualem decet eſſe ſororem.

The office of a dramatic poet, in the time of antient tragedy, required, we may obſerve, a wider circle of knowledge, and far more extenſive abilities, than the preſent age demands, or expects from him: for, beſides all the other requiſites, it was neceſſary that he ſhould be maſter of every kind of verſe, completely ſkilled in muſic, and able to direct all the evolutions, movements, or (if ſo we chuſe to call them) the dances of the chorus: Euripides, we are told, inſtructed his ſingers in the grave and ſolemn airs, which accompanied all his pieces; and Plutarch informs us, that the people of Suſæ, and the Perſians, by the command of Alexander, ſung the tragedies of Sophocles, and his ſucceſſors in the drama, according to the meaſures which thoſe writers had themſelves preſcribed at the firſt repreſentation of them.

TRAGEDY was, in its infancy, what Ariſtotle calls it, § made up of muſic and dancing; and the old tragedians, Theſpis, Partinas, Cartinus, and Phrynicus, according to Athenæus, bore the name of * dancers, becauſe they uſed ſo

§ Ορχησικωτερα.

* Ορχησικοι.

ſo much dancing in their choruſſes! Tetrameters were therefore for a long time made uſe of in the verſe, as that foot was moſt proper for motion, though it was afterwards changed to the iambic; when the dance or † movement was confined to the ſongs or intermedes of the chorus, which in the more perfect ſtate of tragedy became, as I before obſerved, but a ſmall part of the whole drama. What inſtruments the antients made uſe of in their theatrical muſic, and in what its principal merit conſiſted, it is perhaps at this diſtance of time not eaſy to determine; if any of my readers are deſirous of prying into a ſubject ſo dark and intricate, I muſt refer them to Plutarch's dialogue on this ſubject, together with Monſieur Burette's obſervations on it in the tenth volume of the hiſt. de l'Acad. to which may be added, P. Meneſtrier's diſſertation on antient and modern muſic, where they will meet with as much information as I believe can be given them on this head.

THE uſe of muſic in tragedy hath been matter of much doubt and contention with modern critics: M. Dacier thinks it by no means eſſential, and greatly condemns Ariſtotle for his approbation of it; it is, notwithſtanding, indiſputable, that on the antient ſtage, muſic was a moſt beautiful adjunct to poetry, and contributed in a great meaſure to the high finiſhing and perfection of the Greek drama; we cannot perhaps ſo eaſily reſolve, how far it may be reconcileable to modern manners,

† This movement was probably (as an excellent critic obſerves) becoming, graceful and majeſtic, as appears from the name uſually given it, εμμελεια, 'this word (ſays he) cannot well be tranſlated 'into our language, but expreſſes all that grace and concinnity of 'motion which the dignity of the choral ſong required.'

See notes on the art of poetry, v. 1. p. 151.

manners, though from ſome late experiments on ‡ one of our theatres, we have reaſon to think, that, when introduced with propriety, it might be attended with its deſired effect.

ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GREEK THEATRE.

THE GREEK THEATRE is amongſt thoſe ſuperb monuments of antient taſte, genius, and magnificence which would probably have ſurvived the depredations even of time itſelf, if ignorance and barbariſm had not conſpired to ruin and deſtroy it: of all thoſe noble and coſtly ſtructures which Athens, and Sparta, dedicated to the muſes, we have now ſcarce any thing but a few inconſiderable remains, ſufficiently ſtriking to raiſe our curioſity, but at the ſame time, too mutilated and imperfect to ſatisfy it. Thoſe writers of antiquity, who have occaſionally mentioned the conſtruction of the theatre, as they treated a ſubject univerſally known by their cotemporaries, did not think themſelves obliged to handle it with that degree of accuracy and preciſion, which were ſo neceſſary for the information of poſterity; in conſequence of which, they frequently gave names to one part of the building, that more properly belonged to another, and by a confuſion of terms, which could not miſlead the readers of their own times, involved their ſucceſſors in a labyrinth of error and obſcurity; add to this, that the ſame fate hath attended the deſcription of the building, which

 had

‡ In the repreſentation of Merope, the ſolemnity of the ſacrifice ſcene is greatly heightened by the muſic and ſong; the judicious manager of Dury-lane theatre has introduced it into ſeveral other tragedies with ſucceſs.

had before happened to the ſeveral conſtituent parts of the drama; modern critics too often confound together the Greek and Roman theatre (though they differ moſt eſſentially in many parts) we find terms frequently appropriated to one, which belong only to the other; and the whole ſo imperfectly delineated, by almoſt every one of them, as to render it throughout a matter of doubt and uncertainty. Some lights, however, have from time to time been thrown on this dark and intricate ſubject, whoſe ſcattered rays, when united and drawn to a point, will exhibit to us the following tolerably accurate, though ſtill imperfect, repreſentation of it.

THE ANTIENT GREEK THEATRE, in its higheſt ſtate of perfection, was a moſt ſpacious, noble, and magnificent ſtructure, built with the moſt * ſolid and durable materials, and capable, we are told, of holding thirty thouſand ſpectators: to give my readers a proper idea of its form, I ſhall divide it into three principal departments; one for the actors, which they called the ſcene; another for the ſpectators, under the general denomination of the theatre; and a third called the orcheſtra, allotted to the muſic, mimes, and dancers. To determine the ſituation of theſe three parts, and conſequently the diſpoſition of the whole, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that the plan (here annexed) conſiſts on one ſide of

* The theatre at Athens was originally built with wood, but being one day remarkably crowded on the exhibition of a tragedy, written by Pratinas, the benches fell in, many of the ſpectators were killed, and the whole fabric buried in ruins; this melancholly accident induced the Athenians, naturally fond of ſpectacles, to ſet about the conſtruction of thoſe ſuperb edifices, which they afterwards made uſe of, built with the moſt coſtly marble, and adorned with every thing that could render them ſolid, noble, ſplendid and magnificent.

of two ſemi-circles, drawn from the ſame centre, but of different diameters; and on the other, of a ſquare of the ſame length, but leſs by one-half; the ſpace between the two ſemi-circles, was allotted for the ſpectators: the ſquare at the end, to the actors; and the intervening area in the middle, to the orcheſtra. Thus we ſee, the theatre was circular on one ſide, and ſquare on the other; round the whole were ranges of porticos (ſee letters A and B) more or leſs, according to the number of ſtories, the moſt magnificent theatres always having three, one raiſed above another; to theſe porticos, which might properly be ſaid to form the body of the edifice, the women were admitted, being the only places covered from rain and heat; the reſt were entirely † open above, and all the repreſentations in the ‡ day-time.

THE ſeats for the ſpectators (letter I) extended from the upper portico, down quite to the orcheſtra, (letter H) differing in their width and number with the ſize of the theatre, and were always ſo formed, that a line drawn from the top to the bottom, would touch the extremities of every one of them; between each ſtory was a wide paſſage leading to the ſeats, every one of which, for the better accommodation of

 the

† The amphitheatres in Spain were formerly built ſomething in this manner, having no roof, ſo that the ſpectators were often expoſed to rain, heat, and all the inclemency of the ſeaſons.

‡ In many cities of the two Lombardies (as Riccoboni informs us) the ſpring of the year is allotted for comedies, which are repreſented in the day-time without any lights, the play-honſes being built in ſuch a manner, as to be ſufficiently enlightened by the ſun: and, in the year 1609, a regulation was made in France, by the civil magiſtrate, by which the players were ordered to open their doors at one o'clock, to begin the entertainment at two, and to put an end to it at half an hour after four.

the audience, was at ſuch a diſtance from the ſeat placed over it, that the feet of the perſons above, could not touch thoſe who were below.

THE magiſtrates were ſeparated from the populace by a place appropriated to them, called Βουλευτικος; the Εφηβικος, or ſeat of the youths, was aſſigned to the young men of quality and diſtinction; there were alſo ſome προεδριαι, or firſt ſeats, allotted to perſons of extraordinary merit, where all thoſe were placed, who had diſtinguiſhed themſelves by any ſignal ſervices to the common-wealth; ſuch in proceſs of time became hereditary, and were appointed for particular families; all theſe were very near to, or ſometimes in, the orcheſtra, and as cloſe as the ſtructure of the theatre would admit, to the ſcene, or place of repreſentation.

THE orcheſtra, being between the two parts of the building, one of which was circular, and the other ſquare, partook of the ſhape of both, varying in its ſize according to that of the theatre, though its width was always double its length, and that width always the ſemi-diameter of the whole edifice; to this they entered by paſſages under the ſeats of the ſpectators, the whole being entirely on a ‖ level with the ground; this led alſo to the ſtair-caſes. (letter K) by § which

‖ In the Roman theatre, the ſenators and chief magiſtrates frequently ſat in the orcheſtra, where finding the inconveniency of the level, it was remedied by raiſing the ſeats a little above each other.

§ Monſ. Boindin reckons up very accurately the number of the ſtair-caſes, and of the ſeats, together with many other minute particulars; what I have extracted from him may ſuffice to give the reader a general idea of the whole ſtructure; if the curious in architecture are deſirous of farther information, I muſt refer them to the diſcourſe itſelf, which they will find in the firſt volume of the hiſt. de le acad. quarto edition, p. 136.

which they aſcended to the different ſtories of the theatre, ſome leading to the ſeats, others to the porticos, of courſe turned different ways, but all equally wide, diſengaged from each other, and ſo commodious, as to give ſufficient room for the ſpectators to go in and out, without the leaſt crowding or inconvenience.

BETWEEN the orcheſtra and the ſtage was the υποσκηνιον, hypoſcenium (letter E) ſo called, becauſe it was cloſe to the ſcene or place of repreſentation: here, it is moſt probable, were placed the inſtruments that accompanied the actors throughout the drama.

* BEYOND this was the large and vacant ſpace called προσκηνιον, proſcenium, or λογειον (letter D) repreſenting the ſcene of action, which was always ſome public place, as a road, a grove, a court-yard, adjoining to ſome temple or palace; the length and breadth of this area, or ſtage, varied according to the ſize of the theatre, but was always of the ſame height, and in the Greek theatre never more or leſs than ten feet.

AT the extremity of the whole building, was the παρασκηνιον, or poſt-ſcenium (letter G) that place behind the ſcenes, where the actors dreſſed themſelves, and prepared the habits, ſcenes, machines, and every thing neceſſary to the repreſentation. AT

* Between this part and the proſcenium, Mr. Boindin places the Greek Θυμελη, or thymele (letter F) ſo called, becauſe in ſhape it reſembled an altar: here he imagines, the chorus was placed, and performed the ſongs and dances: but this place, with all due deference to that ingenious critic, could by no means be allotted to the chorus, being much too diſtant from the ſtage, where, we know from the tragedies themſelves, the chorus muſt always be, as, beſides the ſongs or intermedes, it bears a part in the dialogue throughout the piece, and conſequently muſt ſtand cloſe to the other actors.

At the back of the ſtage (letter L) were the triangular machines for the ſcenery, called by the Greeks † περιακτοι which, as they turned on their own axis, might be ſhifted on any occaſion, and exhibited three different views or changes of ſcene; theſe were not made uſe of in tragedy, which required but one ſcene throughout, but moſt probably at the end of it, to prepare the exhibition of the comedy or mime, which in the antient theatre frequently ſucceeded each other, perhaps two or three times on the ſame day.

Amongst the many peculiarities of the Greek theatre, with regard to its conſtruction, there is not perhaps any thing ſo remarkable, and which we can ſo difficultly form any idea of, as the echœa, or brazen veſſels, which, according to ‡ Vitruvius, were made uſe of by the Greeks, to render

† Utrimque aliæ interdum portæ quarum in poſtibus affixæ machinæ περιακτοι dictæ, quæ pro re ac tempore circumagebantur. Suid. To theſe Virgil is ſuppoſed to allude in the third book of the Georgics.

Vel ſcena ut verſis diſcedat frontibus - - - - -

Which is thus explained by Servius. 'Scena (ſays he) quæ fiebat aut verſilis aut ductilis; verſilis tunc erat cum ſubito tota machinis convertebatur, et aliam picturæ faciem oſtendebat; ductilis tunc cum tractis tabulatis hac atque illac ſpecies picturæ nudabatur interior.' What Virgil mentions, was probably an improvement on the περιακτοι, as practiſed in the Roman theatre.

‡ Vaſa æra, (ſays Vetruvius) quæ in cellis ſub gradibus mathematica ratione collocantur, ad ſymphonias muſicas, ſive concentus, ita componuntur uti vox ſcenici ſonitus conveniens in diſpoſitionibus tactu cum offenderit, aucta cum incremento clarior ac ſuavior ad ſpectatorum perveniat aures.

To theſe echœa it is ſuppoſed, Caſſiodorus alludes, where he ſays, 'tragædia, concavis repercuſſionibus roborata, talem ſonum videtur efficere, ut pæne ab homine non credatur.'

Caſſ. ep. 51, lib. 1.

render the articulation diſtinct, and give a more extenſive power to the voice, an expedient doubtleſs extremely neceſſary in ſo large a theatre; for this purpoſe, we are told, that they had recourſe to ſeveral round concave plates of braſs, placed under the ſeats of the ſpectators, ſo diſpoſed and contrived, by the moſt exact geometrical and harmonic proportions, as to reverberate the voice, and carry the words of the actor to the fartheſt part of the building; the manner in which this was performed, is, I muſt confeſs, to me utterly incomprehenſible; certain it is, that no idea can be formed of it, without the moſt profound knowledge of antient muſic, and antient architecture: I ſhall not, therefore, trouble my readers with an explication of what few, I believe, would be able to comprehend; but if any of them are deſirous of a more intimate acquaintance with theſe brazen echos, I muſt refer them to the ſixth book of the learned Vitruvius, and Monſieur Burette's treatiſe on antient muſic.

ON THE SCENES, MACHINES, AND DECORATIONS.

THOUGH we have no genuine or regular account now extant, of the machines and decorations of the Greek theatre, we have ſufficient reaſon to conclude from the tragedies themſelves ſtill remaining, that ſuch things were made uſe of in the repreſentation; as we find in almoſt every one of them gods aſcending and deſcending, ghoſts and furies frequently appearing on the ſtage, with divinities celeſtial and terreſtrial; for all theſe, we need not doubt but that the antients had machines of various kinds, according to the vari-

ous exigencies and circumſtances that required them; and, as we learn from the ſcattered remains of Heſychius, Pollux, and other writers, were no ſtrangers to * trap-doors, flying chariots, magnificent arches, flights, ropes, pullies, and in ſhort, all the mechanical apparatus of the ſtage. As to the ſcenery, we know that the ſtrict regard paid by the Greek tragedians to the unity of place, confined the whole repreſentation of their pieces to one particular ſpot; this however we find was ſumptuouſly adorned with all the embelliſhments which art or nature could furniſh; magnificent † columns, porticos, ſtatues, paintings, baſſo-relievos, every thing, which the elegant taſte and genius of Greece could produce, was added to enrich the ſcene; even ſo early as in the time of Æſchylus, we are ‡ told that the decorations of the theatre were made according to the exacteſt rules of perſpective. The whole theatre (porticos excepted) being, as I before obſerved, uncovered, and conſequently expoſed to the heat of the ſun, and inclemency of the weather; a kind of thin curtain, faſtened probably to a large pillar or pole in the center,

* Scenæ tragicæ (ſays Vitruvius) deformantur columnis, faſtigiis, & ſignis, reliquiſque regalibus rebus.

† Ἀναπειςματα, ſunt rudentes ſcenici quibus per tractoria organa latentes perſonæ ſuſtollebantur in ſcenam. Ἐωρημα, rudentes qui ex alto ſuſpenſi ſunt ut ſuſtineant eos qui ære ferri videntur. Pollux.

‡ Tum Athenis, Agatarchus, Æſchylo docente, tragediam primus ſcenam fecit, & de eo commentarium reliquit, ex quo moniti Democritus & Anaxagorus de eadem re ſcripſerunt quemadmodum oporteat ad aciem oculorum, radiorumque extenſionem, centro conſtituto ad lineas ratione naturali reſpondere; uti de re incerta certæ imagines ædificiorum in ſcenarum picturis redderent ſpeciem & quæ in directis planiſque frontibus ſint figurata, alia abſidentia, alia prominentia eſſe videantur. Vitruvius, lib. viii.

center of the building, was extended over the whole; as the heat notwithſtanding (which is always the caſe in our modern tents) frequently penetrated through them, and the breaths of ſo numerous an aſſembly muſt have been offenſive, they had recourſe to artificial ſhowers of rain, which they conveyed from the top of the porticos through the ſtatues that were diſperſed over the different parts of the building; ‖ Mr. Boindin adds, that the water on theſe occaſions was always ſcented, ſo that the ſpectators were not only refreſhed by this gentle dew falling upon them, but at the ſame time regaled with the moſt exquiſite perfume.

ON THE MASQUES.

IT appears from the united teſtimonies of ſeveral antient writers, that the actors of Greece never appeared on the ſtage in tragedy, or any other ſpecies of the drama without maſques: it is moſt probable, that before the time of Æſchylus, to whom * Horace aſcribes this invention, they diſguiſed their features either, as in the days of Theſpis, by daubing them with the lees of wine, or by painting, falſe hair, and other artifices of the ſame kind with thoſe, which are

‖ As I do not remember that we have any authority from antient Greek writers for this anecdote, I ſhould rather be inclined to conſider the perfumed water, as a refinement of modern luxury, and aſcribe it to the improvements of the Roman theatre.

* Suidas and Athenæus attribute the invention of maſques to the poet Chœrilus. Horace gives the honour to Æſchylus; but Ariſtotle who we may ſuppoſe was as well acquainted with this matter as any of them, fairly acknowledges himſelf entirely ignorant of it. 'Τις δε προσωπα, (ſays he) απεδοκε πηγνυται.'

are practiſed in the modern theatre: maſques however were ſoon introduced, and looked on, we may imagine, in thoſe days, as a moſt ingenious device; that, which they made uſe of in tragedy, was, according to the beſt information we can gather concerning it, a kind of caſque or helmet, which covered the whole head, repreſenting not only the face, but the beard, hair, ears, and even in the women's maſques, all the ornaments of the coif, or cap, being made of † different materials according to the ſeveral improvements, which it received from time to time; the moſt perfect and durable were of wood, executed with the greateſt care, by ſculptors of the firſt rank and eminence, who received their directions from the poet. It ſeems to have been an eſtabliſhed opinion amongſt the antients, that their heroes and demi-gods, who were generally the ſubject of their tragedies, were of an extraordinary ſize, far ſurpaſſing that of common mortals; we muſt not be ſurpriſed therefore to find their tragic poets, in compliance with this popular prejudice, raiſing them upon ‡ the

† The firſt maſques were made of the leaves of a plant, to which the Greeks on this account gave the name of προσωπιον, 'quidam (ſays Pliny) Arcion perſonatam vocant, cujus folio nul-'lum eſt latius.' Virgil mentions them as compoſed of the barks of trees.

Oraque corticibus ſumunt horrenda cavatis.

And Pollux tells us, that they were made of leather, lined with cloth or ſtuff ενδοθεν δ' αθωνιον, εξωθεν δε σκυτινιον προσωπον.

‡ The cothurnus, or buſkin, was a kind of large and high ſhoe, the ſole of which being made of very thick wood, raiſed the actors to an extraordinary ſize; Juvenal tells us, that it made them appear extremely tall, and compares an actreſs without her cothurnus to a pigmy.

- - - - - - breviorque videtur
Virgine pygmeæ nullis adjuta cothurnis.

The cothurnus was probably of the ſame form as the high ſhoe, or

the cothurnus, ſwelling them to an immenſe magnitude, and by the aſſiſtance of a ‖ large and frightful maſque, endeavouring to fill the minds of the ſpectators with a religious awe, and veneration of them: the tragique maſques were generally copied from the buſts or ſtatues of the principal perſonages, and conſequently conveyed the moſt exact idea and reſemblance of them, which muſt have given an air of probability to the whole: thoſe, which repreſented § ghoſts and furies, were made ſtill more terrible and frightful; but the maſques of the * dancers, or perſons, who formed the body of the chorus, had nothing diſagreeable.

As in the infancy of tragedy there were probably but few actors, the uſe of maſques gave each of them an opportunity of playing ſeveral parts, wherein the character, age, and ſex were different, without being diſcovered; the large opening of the mouth was ſo contrived, as to increaſe the ſound of the voice, and ſend it to the fartheſt part of the theatre, which was ſo extremely large and ſpacious, that without ſome ſuch aſſiſtance we cannot eaſily conceive how the actor could be well heard or ſeen; in all theatrical painting, ſcenery

piece of cork, bound about with tin or ſilver, worn by the Spaniſh women, called a chioppine, and which, it ſhould ſeem by a paſſage in Shakeſpear, was uſed on our own ſtage. 'Your ladyſhip is 'nearer heaven than when I ſaw you laſt, by the altitude of a 'chioppine.' Hamlet, act 2, ſcene 7.

‖ The tragic maſques had large, expanded, mouths, as if (ſays the humorous Lucian) they were about to devour the ſpectators, ως καταπιομενους τους θεατας.

§ The maſque commonly uſed was called ſimply προσωπειον; the others, μορμολυκειαν, and γοργονειον.

* 'Τω δε ορχησω σχημα (ſays Lucian) κοσμιον και ευπρεπες. 'Το δε προσωπον αυτο καλλιστον, τω ευπροσωπω δραματι εοικος, 'ω κεχηνος, αλλα συμμιμητικος.'

nery and decoration, the objects, we know, muſt be magnified beyond the life and reality, to produce their proper effect; and, in the ſame manner, we may imagine that, in ſo extenſive an area as the Greek theatre, it might be neceſſary to exaggerate the features, and enlarge the form of the actor; add to this, that at ſuch a diſtance as moſt of the ſpectators were, the natural expreſſion of the eyes and countenance muſt be entirely loſt. The ſanguine admirers of every thing that is antient, bring many more arguments to defend the tragic † maſque; but after all that can be ſaid in its favour, it is perhaps ſcarce defenſible; the face is certainly the beſt index of the mind, and the paſſions are as forcibly expreſſed by the features, as by the words and geſture of the performer: the Greeks in this, as in many other particulars, ſacrificed propriety, truth and reaſon, to magnificence and vanity.

ALL the expences of the theatre were defrayed by the ſtate, and were indeed ſo conſiderable, that nothing but the purſe of an opulent republic, could poſſibly have ſupported them, as it is confidently affirmed by ‡ hiſtorians that Athens ſpent more in dramatic repreſentations than in all her wars.

OF

† Maſques have had their admirers in modern as well as antient times, and been uſed on more ſtages than that of Greece: even towards the middle of the laſt century, the actors both in tragedy and comedy on the French theatre wore maſques. The Engliſh is doubtleſs in this reſpect, as well as in many others, infinitely ſuperior to the Athenian ſtage; notwithſtanding which, I will promiſe to join the προσωποφιλοι, and vote for the reſtoration of the antient maſque, whenever they will ſhew me one that can repreſent the happy features of Quin, in the character of Falſtaff, or give us an idea of a frantic Lear, like the look and face of the inimitable Garrick.

‡ This aſſertion which ſeems rather hyperbolical, is notwithſtanding ſupported by the grave Plutarch, who, ſpeaking of the

OF THE TIME WHEN TRAGEDY FLOURISHED IN GREECE.

IT was not my deſign in this ſhort Diſſertation (nor could indeed be comprehended within the limits of it) to point out with Ariſtotle, what tragedy ought to be, but ſimply to ſhew what it was during the lives of the great triumvirate, as far as we can judge from the remains now extant; in my account of its ſeveral parts therefore I have not followed the ſteps of the great critic, but principally confined myſelf to thoſe particulars, which diſtinguiſh the antient from the modern drama, and which may beſt enable us to form a proper and adequate idea of the Greek tragedy; but even the moſt perfect knowledge of all the eſſential and conſtituent parts will be found inſufficient for this purpoſe, unleſs we take into our view alſo the time when, and the very ſpot where, every piece was exhibited. Dramatic, as well as every other ſpecies of poetry, is beſt known and diſtinguiſhed by the place of its birth; it will take its form colour, and complexion from its native ſoil, as naturally as water derives its taſte and qualities from the different kinds of earth, through which it flows: it is abſolutely neceſſary, therefore, before we can judge impartially of the Greek tragedies, to tranſport ourſelves to the ſcene where they were repreſented, to ſhake off the Engliſhman for a time, and put on the Athenian.

IT has been with great truth remarked, that there is allotted to every nation upon earth a particular period, which may

Athenians, aſſures us, that the repreſentation of the Bacchanals, Phœniſſæ, Œdipus, Antigone, Medea, and Electra, coſt them more money than the defence of their own liberties in the field, or all their conteſt with the Barbarians.

may be called their zenith of perfection, to which they approach by ſlow degrees, and from which, they gradually and inſenſibly recede: in this happy age of power and proſperity, the arts and ſciences, taſte, genius, and literature, have always ſhone with diſtinguiſhed luſtre: ſuch was the time when Athens gave laws to all Greece, whilſt the glorious victories of Marathon and Salamis animated every tongue with eloquence, and filled every breaſt with exultation; that haughty and ſucceſsful people maintained for a long time her ſovereignty over the neighbouring nations: her councils were influenced by prudence, and her battles crowned with conqueſt; the treaſure which ſhe had ſeized in the temple of Delphos, enabled her not only to carry on her wars with ſucceſs, but left her a plentiful reſerve alſo to ſupply her luxuries: this was the age of heroes, philoſophers, and poets; when architecture, painting, and ſculpture, foſtered by the genial warmth of power and protection, ſo conſpicuouſly diſplayed their ſeveral beauties, and produced all thoſe ſuperb monuments of antient taſte and genius, which united to diſtinguiſh this illuſtrious æra: during this happy period, tragedy appeared in her meridian ſplendor, when the great triumvirate exhibited before the moſt polite and refined nation then upon earth, thoſe excellent pieces, which extorted applauſe, honours, and rewards, from their cotemporaries, and enſured to them the deſerved admiration of all poſterity: it may indeed with great truth be aſſerted, that the ſame remarkable love of order and ſimplicity, the ſame juſtneſs of ſymmetry and proportion, the ſame elegance, truth, and ſublimity, which appeared in the buildings, pictures, and ſtatues, of that age, are conſpicuous alſo in the antient drama.

In the time of the Greek tragedy, the Athenians dictated as it were to all mankind; proud by nature, and elated:

ted by riches and proſperity, they looked down with the utmoſt contempt on the neighbouring nations, whom they ſtyled and treated as barbarians; as a republic, the avowed enemies of monarchy and dependence; as a free people, bold and impatient of reſtraint or contradiction; ſtrongly attached to their own laws and cuſtoms; lively and active, but inconſtant and ſuperſtitious: their manners plain and ſimple, but their taſte at the ſame time elegant and refined. As the theatre was ſupported entirely at the expence of the public, the public directed all its operations; we might naturally expect, therefore, that the poet would for his own ſake take care to adapt his compoſitions to the public taſte; to fall in with national prejudices and ſuperſtitions; to ſooth the pride, flatter the ſelf-love, and adopt the opinions of his fellow-citizens: we muſt not wonder to hear, as we conſtantly do, (in the tragedies that remain) the praiſes of Athens perpetually reſounded, the ſuperiority of her laws and conſtitution extolled, and her form of government preferred to every other; oblique hints, or direct accuſations of folly and weakneſs in her enemies; public facts frequently alluded to, and public events recorded; their own feſtivals, ſacrifices, * religious rites and ceremonies, carefully and accurately deſcribed; Sparta and Thebes, as rival ſtates, occaſionally ſatyrized and condemned; and above all, every opportunity taken to point out the evils of monarchy, and engrave their favourite democratical principles on the hearts of the people: it is not improbable but that many of thoſe moral ſentences, and political apothegms, which at this diſtance

* See, amongſt many other inſtances, the noble deſcription of the Pythian games, in the ſecond act of Electra, of my tranſlation of Sophocles, and the ſacred grove of the Eumenides, in the Œdipus Coloneus, act 3d.

diſtance of time appear cold and inſipid to us, had, beſides their general tendency, ſome double meaning, ſome alluſion to particular facts and circumſtances, which gave them an additional luſtre: without this key to the Greek theatre, it is impoſſible to form a right idea of antient tragedy, which was not, like our own, mere matter of amuſement, but the channel of public inſtruction, and the inſtrument of public policy; thoſe readers, therefore, who are utterly unacquainted with the religion, laws, and cuſtoms of Athens, are by no means adequate judges of it; they only † condemn, for the moſt part, what they do not underſtand, and raſhly judge of the whole edifice, whilſt they view but an inconſiderable part of the building. But ſo warmly are we attached to what lies before us, and ſo prejudiced in favour of thoſe modes and cuſtoms, which are eſtabliſhed amongſt ourſelves, that we generally rate the merit of paſt performances by the ſtandard and rule of preſent practice; the antients, therefore, are ſubject to the diſadvantage of being tried, not, as juſtice demands, by their laws, but by our own.

And here it is worthy of our obſervation to remark, that the Greek tragedy ſeems, in its whole progreſs, to have kept pace with the place of its birth, and to have flouriſhed and declined with its native country: the riſe of Athens from meanneſs and obſcurity to power and ſplendor, may be dated from the battle of Marathon, which laid the foundation of all her future glory; ſoon after which, we find Æſchylus forming his plan of antient tragedy; after him aroſe the immortal Sophocles, who improved upon, and greatly exceeded, his illuſtrious maſter; to theſe ſucceeded Euripides, born ten years after the battle of Marathon, and on the very day of the ſea-fight at Salamis: whilſt theſe illuſtrious

† Damnant quod non intelligunt. Quintilian.

illuſtrious writers flouriſhed, Athens flouriſhed alſo, for above half a century: Euripides was fifty years of age, when the Peloponneſian war began; from which period the ſuperiority of Athens viſibly declined, and was ſoon entirely deſtroyed by the rival power of Sparta, in confederacy with the Perſian monarch. Sophocles, happy in not ſurviving the honour and liberty of his country, expired one year before the taking of Athens by Lyſander, when the ſovereignty of Greece devolved to the Lacedæmonians.

OF THE THREE GREAT TRAGEDIANS.

ÆSCHYLUS was born at Athens, in the firſt year of the * ſixtieth olympiad: he embraced very early in life the profeſſion of † arms, and diſtinguiſhed himſelf as an officer at the famous battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Platæa: the perpetual ſcenes of ſlaughter and bloodſhed, in which he was during a long ſeries of years unavoidably engaged, ſeem to have tinged his imagination with that portion of the fierce and terrible, ſo diſtinguiſhable in all his pieces: during the intervals of his military occupation, he found time to write no leſs than ſeventy, or, according to ſome hiſtorians, ninety, tragedies, only ſeven of which are now extant: when he was pretty far advanced in years, he loſt the poetical prize to Sophocles, then but a boy, or, as other writers with more probability aſſert, to Simonides, in an elegy on the heroes who fell at Marathon; a circumſtance

* Five hundred and forty years before Chriſt.

† He had two brothers, who were likewiſe in the army, Cynegirus and Aminias; at the battle of Salamis, the former loſt his life, the latter one of his arms.

ſtance which ſo deeply affected him, that he immediately withdrew from Athens, and retired to the court of Hiero, king of Sicily, a friend of the muſes, whoſe palace was a kind of aſylum for the diſcontented poets of Greece; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and ſplendor, to the age of ſixty-five. The writers of his life, not willing to admit that ſo great a poet could die a common death, have thought proper to dignify his laſt moments with a circumſtance, which carries with it more of the marvellous than the probable: an oracle had, it ſeems, declared (for oracles were always ready on theſe occaſions) that Æſchylus ſhould fall by the hand of heaven; accordingly, that this might be fulfilled, it is reported that an eagle was ſeen in the air, holding in her talons a tortoiſe, which (unfortunately for the bard) ſhe let go, and dropping on the head of Æſchylus, who happened to be walking beneath, fractured his ſkull: he is ſaid to have gained thirteen victories over his rival poets, which one would think was an ample recompence for the ſingle failure that gave him ſo much uneaſineſs. His tragedies were greatly admired during his life, and after his death held in the higheſt eſteem, inſomuch that a decree was paſſed by the ſenate, declaring, that if any perſon would exhibit the tragedies of Æſchylus, the ſtate would bear the charges of the chorus, and defray the whole expence of the repreſentation; an honour, which probably had not been beſtowed on any poet before his time, though afterwards, as I obſerved above, they were generally played at the public coſt.

Æschylus is a bold, nervous, animated writer: his imagination fertile, but licentious; his judgment true, but ungoverned; his genius lively, but uncultivated; his ſentiments noble and ſublime, but at the ſame time wild, irregular, and frequently fantaſtic; his plots, for the moſt part, rude and inartificial: his ſcenes unconnected and ill-placed; his language ge-

nerally

nerally poignant and expreſſive, though in many places turgid and obſcure, and even too often degenerating into fuſtian and bombaſt; his characters ſtrongly marked, but all partaking of that wild fierceneſs, which is the characteriſtic of their author; his peculiar excellency was in raiſing terror and aſtoniſhment, in warm and deſcriptive ſcenes of war and ſlaughter: if we conſider the ſtate of the drama when he undertook to reform and improve it, we ſhall behold him with admiration; if we compare him with his two illuſtrious ſucceſſors, he hides his diminiſhed head, and appears far leſs conſpicuous: were we to draw a parallel between dramatic poetry and painting, we ſhould perhaps ſtile him the Julio Romano of antient tragedy.

SOPHOCLES was born at Colonè, a burgh or village in Attica; his father Sophilus was, as ſome writers tell us, a ‡ blackſmith; or, according to a more favourable heraldry, maſter of a forge: as the profeſſion of arms was at that time more honourable, and probably more advantageous, than any other, Sophocles entered into it, and followed the ſteps of his maſter Æſchylus, both as a ſoldier and a poet; in the former capacity he had the honour to ſerve under the great ‖ Pericles. As a dramatic writer, he was early diſtinguiſhed for his extraordinary abilities, which firſt placed him on a level, and afterwards raiſed him to a ſuperiority over his illuſtrious rival; he is ſuppoſed to have written one hundred

‡ Much ink has been ſhed by the commentators on this ſubject, both with regard to Sophocles and Demoſthenes, alſo, who was, it ſeems, in the ſame predicament, it not being determined whether his father was a Vulcan or a common cyclop.

‖ Pericles, if we may believe Athenæus, uſed to ſay, that Sophocles was a good ſoldier, but a bad officer; a circumſtance, which, if he had not ſucceeded better as a poet, it is probable would never have reached poſterity.

and twenty tragedies, only ſeven of which are now remaining; theſe were received by his cotemporaries with the applauſe they ſo highly deſerved: it is remarked, that he never acted himſelf in any of his plays, as Æſchylus and Euripides did, his voice being too weak and low for the ſtage; though he was always preſent at the repreſentation, and received the applauſes of the audience, who, we are told, ſeldom failed to ſignify their approbation by a loud and general clap, both at his entrance into, and leaving, the theatre: he was crowned twenty times, and though he probably ſometimes ſhared the fate of his brother poets by unjuſt cenſure, could never be prevailed on, as his rivals were, to leave his native country, to which he took § every opportunity of ſhewing his ſincereſt attachment: with regard to his death, hiſtorians (if ſcholiaſts and commentators may be ſo called) have indulged themſelves in the ſame liberty which they took with his predeceſſor Æſchylus; ſome kill him with a grape-ſtone; others tell us, that he died with joy at being crowned for one of his tragedies; whilſt a third ſet gravely aſſure us, that having one day an inclination to play a part in his own Antigone, he dipped into a ſpeech too long for his weak lungs, and expired, merely for want of a better breath, in the midſt of it.

After all, as Sophocles, according to various teſtimonies, lived till ninety, it is not improbable that he might have died of * extreme old age, a diſtemper, which is ſeldom,

§ It is with great reaſon imagined, that Sophocles laid the ſcene of his latter Œdipus in Colonè, with a purported deſign of doing honour to the place of his nativity.

* The ſtory of his ſons' ingratitude, told by Pultarch and others is omitted here, becauſe my readers will find it related in my notes on the tranſlation of the Œdipus Coloneus.

Sophocles had ſeveral children, one of which, whoſe name was Iophon, is ſaid to have inherited the dramatic genius of his father,

dom, perhaps, more favourable to poets than to other men: the Athenians erected a ſumptuous monument in memory of him, on which was engraved a ſwarm of † bees, in alluſion to the name generally given him on account of his verſes, which are, indeed, wonderfully ſoft and harmonious, or, as a nobler poet even than Sophocles himſelf expreſſes it, ſweeter than honey, or the honey-comb.

SOPHOCLES may with great truth be called, the prince of antient dramatic poets; his fables, at leaſt of all thoſe tragedies now extant, are intereſting and well-choſen, his plots regular and well-conducted, his ſentiments elegant, noble and ſublime, his incidents natural, his diction ſimple, his manners and characters ſtriking, equal and unexceptionable, his choruſſes well adapted to the ſubject, his moral reflections pertinent and uſeful, and his numbers in every part to the laſt degree ſweet and harmonious; the warmth of his imagination is ſo tempered by the perfection of his judgment, that his ſpirit, however animated, never wanders into licentiouſneſs, whilſt at the ſame time the fire of his genius ſeldom ſuffers the moſt unintereſting parts of his tragedy to ſink into coldneſs and inſipidity; his peculiar excellence ſeems to lie in the ‡ deſcriptive; and, excluſive of his dramatic powers,

and to have written four tragedies, the names only of which are come down to us, viz. Ilium, Achilles, Telephus, and Actæon.

† Sophocles was univerſally ſtiled, the Bee. Some commentators have taken the bees from off his tomb, and hived them in his cradle, aſſuring us, that when Sophocles was an infant, a ſwarm of them was ſeen to alight upon his lips, which was at that time looked on as a preſage of his future eloquence.

‡ For a proof of this, I would refer my readers to his fine deſcription of the Pythian games in the Electra; the diſtreſs of Philoctetes in Lemnos; and the praiſes of Athens in the Œdipus Coloneus.

he is certainly a greater poet than either of his illuſtrious rivals: were I to draw a ſimilitude of him, as I did of Æſchylus, from painting, I ſhould ſay that his ordonnance was ſo juſt, his figures ſo well grouped and contraſted, his colours ſo glowing and natural, all his pieces in ſhort executed in ſo bold and maſterly a ſtyle, as to wreſt the palm from every other hand, and point him out as the Raphael of the antient drama.

EURIPIDES, the ſon of Mneſarchus and Clito, was a native of Salamis, to which place his parents had withdrawn to ſhelter themſelves from the ſtorm of war with which Greece was threatened by the invaſion of Xerxes; he was born in the ſecond year of the || ſeventy-fifth olympiad, in the midſt of all the triumphal pomp, which followed the famous victories of Salamis and Platæa: as the genius of Euripides was not turned, like that of his two predeceſſors, towards a military life, he attached himſelf to philoſophy, at that time the faſhionable taſte and ſtudy of all Greece, under the celebrated § Anaxagoras; but partly perhaps from the fear of incurring his maſter's fate, and partly from the natural bent of his own mind, ſoon left the perplexing paths of ſcience, and gave himſelf up to the more inviting charms of poetry: as the ſtage was probably then, as it is now, far the moſt lucrative branch of it, he applied himſelf early to the writing of tragedies, in which he ſucceeded ſo well, as to enter the liſts with Æſchylus and Sophocles: the immortal

|| Four hundred and ſeventy-five years before Chriſt.

§ Anaxagoras, amongſt many other new opinions advanced by him, had aſſerted that the ſun was a globe of fire, which gave ſo much offence to the ignorance and ſuperſtition of his countrymen, that he was forced to ſubmit to an exile, as the only means of ſaving his life, which would otherwiſe have fallen a ſacrifice to the enraged multitude.

tal Socrates, to whom we may ſuppoſe he was in a great meaſure indebted for the applauſe and encouragement beſtowed on him, not only honoured him with his patronage and protection, but entered into the moſt intimate friendſhip and connection with him; he is even ſaid to have aſſiſted him in ſeveral of his plays; the moral and philoſophic air, which runs through them all, ſeems indeed greatly to favour this opinion, which was induſtriouſly propagated by his * enemies, to obſcure, if poſſible, the luſtre of ſuch conſpicuous merit; he gained † five victories, and is ſuppoſed to have written ſeventy-five tragedies, only nineteen of which are now extant; ſome ‡ letters of Euripides, handed down to us, take notice of a quarrel between him and Sophocles, and give an account alſo of their perfect reconciliation; though his tragedies were, for the moſt part, well received by his cotemporaries, we may imagine that, like other poets, he met with ſome ill treatment from them, as we find him in the latter part of his life at the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon, who loaded him with favours, and treated him with all the reſpect due to his character and abilities; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and ſplendor about three years, when unfortunately wandering one day into a ſolitary place, he was ſet on by a pack of hounds, and ‖ torn

* Diogenes Laertius, ſpeaking of Socrates, ſays, ἐδόκει συμποιεῖν Εὐριπίδῃ. Mneſilicus told the Athenians, that Euripides was only a hammer-man to Socrates, and calls him Εὐριπίδης Σωκρατογομφεύς; the comic poets frequently reproach him for his obligations to the philoſopher.

† Some commentators correct the text of A. Gellius, and make it fifteen.

‡ The Engliſh reader may find theſe letters at the end of my tranſlation of the Epiſtles of Phalaris, publiſhed in 1749.

‖ One of his biographers acquaints us, that the dogs were planted there on purpoſe, and ſet on by a brother bard, grown jea-

to pieces, at the age of ſeventy-five. Aulus Gellius informs us, that the Athenians ſent to Macedon for his body, and had prepared to grace it with a pompous and ſplendid funeral, but the Macedonians refuſing to deliver it, they contented themſelves with erecting a magnificent tomb to his memory, and graving his name and honours on the empty marble; a copy of his works was carefully depoſited amongſt the archives, and ſo highly eſteemed, that a king of Egypt in vain for a long time ſolicited a copy of them, which the Athenians poſitively refuſed, till a famine happening in Greece, the king in return refuſed to ſell them corn; neceſſity at laſt prevailing, they parted with the manuſcript, and the king acknowledged ſo ſingular a favour, by permitting the merchants of Athens to take away as much corn as they wanted, without paying the uſual tribute.

In ſuch high eſteem were the works of this poet, that many noble Athenians being taken priſoners at § Syracuſe, the unfortunate captives were all put to death, except thoſe, who could repeat any paſſages from the plays of Euripides; theſe men, and theſe alone they pardoned, careſſed, treated with the utmoſt reſpect, and afterwards ſet them at liberty.

Euripides, fortunately for his own character, as well as for poſterity, is come down to us more perfect and entire than either of his cotemporaries; his merit therefore is more eaſily aſcertained; his fables are generally intereſting, his

lous of his riſing reputation, who took this opportunity to diſpatch him; whether there be any truth in the whole ſtory is extremely diſputable; the author however might very well expect to gain credit for it, as it has been cuſtomary time out of mind, and continues ſo to this day, for rival poets to tear one another to pieces.

§ This ſtory is told at large in a ſmall, elegant tract lately publiſhed, intituled an Eſſay on the influence of Philoſophy upon the fine arts, p. 21.

his plots frequently irregular and artificial, his characters ſometimes unequal, but for the moſt part ſtriking and well contraſted, his ſentiments remarkably fine, juſt and proper, his diction, ſoft, elegant, and perſuaſive; he abounds much more in moral apothegms and reflections than Æſchylus or Sophocles, which, as they are not always introduced with propriety, give ſome of his tragedies a ſtiff and ſcholaſtic appearance, with which the ſeverer critics have not failed to reproach him: it is moſt probable, however, that in this he complied with the taſte of his age, and in obedience to the dictates of his friend and maſter, Socrates, who, we may ſuppoſe, thought it no diſgrace to this favourite poet, to deviate from the rigid rules of the drama, in order to render it more ſubſervient to the noble purpoſes of piety and virtue; there is beſides in his dialogue a didactic and argumentative turn, which ſavours ſtrongly of the Socratic diſputant, and which probably procured him the name of the * philoſopher of the theatre.

It is ſaid of Sophocles, that he painted men as they ought to be; of Euripides, that he painted them as they were; a quaint remark, which I ſhall leave the critics to comment and explain, only obſerving, that the latter is much more familiar than the former, deſcends much lower into private life, and conſequently lets down in ſome meaſure the dignity of the buſkin, which in Sophocles is always carefully ſupported: there are ſome ſcenes in Euripides where the ideas are ſo coarſe, and the expreſſion ſo low and vulgar, as, if tranſlated with the utmoſt caution, would perhaps greatly ſhock the delicacy and refinement of modern manners; the feeling reader, notwithſtanding, will be amply recompenſed by that large portion of the tender and pathetic, tho

* ὁ φιλοσοφος της σκηνης

the peculiar excellency of this poet, which is diffused throughout his works; his choruſſes are remarkably beautiful and poetical: they do not indeed, as Ariſtotle has obſerved, always naturally ariſe from and correſpond with the incidents of the drama; this fault however they generally make amends for by the harmony of their numbers, and the many fine moral and religious ſentiments, which they contain.

Upon the whole, though Euripides had not perhaps ſo ſublime a genius as Æſchylus, or a judgment ſo perfect as Sophocles, he ſeems to have written more to the heart than either of them; and if I were to place him with the other two in the ſchool of painters, I ſhould be inclined, from the ſoftneſs of his pencil, to call him the Corregio of the antient drama.

FROM the works of theſe three illuſtrious writers, and from them * alone, we muſt draw all our knowledge of the antient Greek tragedy, which, in the view we have here taken of it, appears to be full, complete and perfect, and has been miſerably disjointed and torn to pieces by the moderns: from the ruins of this noble edifice have ariſen two very imperfect ſtructures, the opera and tragedy of latter times, both greatly, though not equally, defective; the former, confining itſelf merely to the eye and ear, makes but a ſlight

* Of all the Greek tragedies produced by various writers, and which are almoſt innumerable, we have only thirty-three now remaining, though, according to the generally received account, no leſs than two hundred and ſixty, or upwards, were written only by the three great tragedians; all the reſt, except a few inconſiderable fragments, fell a ſacrifice to barbarity, and are buried in oblivion.

ſlight impreſſion on the mind, whilſt the latter, from its omiſſion of the chorus, muſic, ſcenery, and decoration, falls ſhort of that beauty and perfection, which is only to be found in the antient drama; we muſt at the ſame time fairly acknowledge, that our manners and cuſtoms, our opinions, views, taſte and judgment, are ſo different from thoſe of Greece, that her drama is by no means in every reſpect a proper model and ſtandard for modern poets, and muſt, after all we can advance in its favour, always remain among thoſe reproachful monuments of the purity and ſimplicity of former ages, which we cannot imitate, though we are forced to admire.

It muſt be at the ſame time confeſſed, that antient tragedy hath its ſhare with every thing elſe of human imperfection: too ſtrict an attention to the unities hath fettered and confined it; many of its beauties are merely local and temporal; the plots are frequently unintereſting, and ill-conducted, the ſpeeches either too long or too ſhort, the expreſſions ſometimes coarſe and indelicate; in the general management and repreſentation of the whole, too much is ſacrificed to popular prejudice, ſuperſtition, and vanity, the ruling paſſions of an Athenian audience: too ſtrong an attachment to the laws, cuſtoms, and form of government then prevailing, threw a dull air of uniformity over the drama; the ſame ſtory, the ſame characters and ſentiments, even the ſame expreſſions, too often occur in different tragedies; that ſimplicity, which ſo diſtinguiſhed the manners of the antients, had naturally its influence over their taſte alſo; they ſelected one plain but noble object, and all the variety which their dramatic poets aimed at, or which the ſpectators required of them, was to place that in different lights, without ſuffering any other to intercept the proſpect of it; they admitted no epiſodes, underplots, or any of thoſe extraneous incidental ornaments which

make

make up modern performances, † and confined themſelves principally to the faults and imperfections of the great, as Milton obſerves of them,

'High actions, and high paſſions, beſt deſcribing.'

But becauſe their taſte was more correct and ſevere, it doth by no means follow, that it was leſs true and perfect than our own: the moderns heap incident on incident, ſentiment on ſentiment, and character on character; a change, which is perhaps rather to be attributed to the corruption of our taſte, than to the improvement of it: it is always a mark of a vitiated ſtomach, when wholeſome and natural food is rejected with diſguſt, and provocatives uſed to raiſe the appetite; in the ſame manner, I cannot but be of opinion, that our impatient thirſt after what critics affect to call buſineſs, is nothing but the reſult of falſe taſte, and depraved judgment: becauſe antient tragedy is not crowded with a heap of unnatural epiſodes, ſtuffed with ſimilies, metaphors, imagery, and poetical flowers, the moderns treat it with contempt, and find nothing in it but a poverty of ſentiment, a want of order and connection in the ſcenes, a flatneſs and inſipidity in the dialogue, a coarſeneſs and indelicacy in the expreſſion; but even if we ſhould grant the truth of every objection, there would ſtill remain, to compenſate for all theſe real or ſeeming imperfections, a variety of true and ſtriking beauties: in antient tragedy, and there only, we ſhall find a moſt exact and faithful picture of the manners of Greece, its religious and civil policy, ſublimity both of ſentiment and diction, regularity, ſymmetry and proportion, excellent moral aphoriſms and

† One of the greateſt advantages of modern tragedy over the antient, is perhaps its judicious deſcent from the adventures of demigods, kings, and heroes, into the humbler walk of private life, which is much more intereſting to the generality of mankind.

and reflections, together with the moſt elegant and amiable ſimplicity diffuſed through every page.

In a word, to affirm, as many who have more learning than judgment ſometimes will, that there are no good tragedies but the antient, is the affectation of ſcholaſtic pedantry; to deny them their deſerved applauſe, and treat them with ridicule and contempt, is, on the other hand, the effect of modern pride, ignorance, and petulancy: upon the whole, French, Italian, Spaniſh, and German critics, may perhaps find ſome excuſe for their ſevere animadverſions on the antient Greek tragedy; it may exerciſe their envy, and find employment for their ſpleen and ill-nature, as they have nothing of their own to put in competition with it; but Engliſhmen ſhould be above ſuch envy, and ſuch malevolence, becauſe they can boaſt a dramatic writer ſuperior to all that antiquity ever produced; we may ſafely join with the moſt ſanguine partizans of Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in the ſincereſt admiration of their ſeveral excellencies, and rejoice within ourſelves to ſee them all united and ſurpaſſed in the immortal and inimitable Shakeſpear.

FINIS.

A J A X.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MINERVA.

ULYSSES.

AJAX.

TECMESSA, wife of Ajax.

TEUCER, brother to Ajax.

AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS.

Compoſed of antient men of Salamis.

AJAX.

ACT I.

SCENE a field near the tent of AJAX.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MINERVA.

SON of Laertes, thy unwearied ſpirit
Is ever watchful to ſurpriſe the foe;
I have obſerved thee wandering midſt the tents
In ſearch of Ajax, where his ſtation lies,
At th' utmoſt verge, and meaſuring o'er his ſteps
But late impreſſed; like Sparta's hounds of ſcent
Sagacious do'ſt thou trace him, nor in vain;
For know the man thou ſeek'ſt is not far from thee;
Yonder he lies, with reeking brow and hands
Deep-ſtained with gore; ceaſe then thy ſearch, and tell me
Wherefore thou com'ſt, that ſo I may inform
Thy doubting mind, and beſt aſſiſt thy purpoſe.

ULY. Minervā, deareſt of th' immortal powers,
For, though I ſee thee not, that well-known voice

Sparta's hounds, &c. The dogs of Sparta, according to all the beſt authors of antiquity, were remarkable for their ſwiftneſs and quick ſcent; Virgil mentions the veloces Spartæ catulos; Gratius Faliſcus alſo takes notice of them: our countryman Shakeſpear, therefore, we ſee, had good authority for his recommendation of Theſeus's hounds, which, he tells us,

Were of the Spartan kind,
So flewed, ſo ſanded, *&c.* See his Midſummer night's dream.

Though I ſee thee not, &c. It was the acknowledged and indiſputable privilege of heathen gods and goddeſſes to be viſible and inviſible, as they thought proper, and likewiſe to extend, whenever

Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my ſoul,
Right haſt thou ſaid, I come to ſearch my foe,
Shield-bearing Ajax; him alone I ſeek:
A deed of horror hath he done this night,
If it be he, for yet we are to know
The certain proof, and therefore came I here
A willing meſſenger: the cattle all,
Our flocks and herds, are, with their ſhepherds, ſlain!
To Ajax every tongue imputes the crime;
One of our ſpies, who ſaw him on the plain,
His ſword ſtill reeking with freſh blood, confirmed it:
Inſtant I fled to ſearch him, and ſometimes
I trace his footſteps, which again I loſe
I know not how; in happy hour thou com'ſt
To aid me, goddeſs; thy protecting hand
Hath ruled me ever, and to thee I truſt
My future fate.

MIN.

they pleaſed, that privilege to others; in the two firſt ſcenes of Ajax, we have inſtances of both; in the firſt, Minerva is not ſeen by Ulyſſes, and in the ſecond, Ulyſſes, by the power of Minerva, is rendered inviſible to Ajax. The reaſon of the latter, is ſufficiently evident; for the former, is not ſo eaſy to aſſign any, as the goddeſs had deſcended on purpoſe to converſe with her favourite; to conceal herſelf, therefore, from his ſight, ſeems unaccountable.

Shield-bearing Ajax, &c. The greater Ajax is diſtinguiſhed by Homer, from whom Sophocles copies his character, for his enormous ſhield, which none but himſelf was able to lift; in the ſeventh book of the Iliad we find it thus deſcribed:

Stern Telamon behind his ample ſhield,
As from a brazen tower, o'erlooked the field;
Huge was its orb, which ſeven thick folds o'ercaſt
Of tough bull-hides, of ſolid braſs the laſt. POPE.

MIN. I know it well, Ulyſſes,
And therefore came to guard and to aſſiſt thee,
Propitious to thy purpoſe.
ULY. Do I right,
My much loved miſtreſs?
MIN. Doubtleſs; his foul deed
Doth well deſerve it.
ULY. What could prompt his hand
To ſuch a deſperate act?
MIN. Achilles' arms;
His rage for loſs of them.
ULY. But wherefore thus
Deſtroy the flock?
MIN. 'Twas in your blood he thought
His hands were ſtained.
ULY. Againſt the Græcians then
Was all his wrath?
MIN. And fatal had it proved
To them, if I had not prevented it.
ULY. What daring inſolence could move h is
To ſuch a deed?
MIN. Alone by night he wandered
In ſecret to attack you.
ULY. Did he come
Cloſe to our tents?
MIN. Even to the double portal,
Where reſt your chiefs.
ULY. What power could then withhold
His maddening hand?
MIN. I purpoſely deceived
His ſight, and ſaved him from the guilty joy,
Turning his rage againſt the mingled flocks,
Your gathered ſpoil: on theſe with violence

He ruſhed, and ſlaughtered many; now he thought
That he had ſlain the Atridæ, now believed
Some other chiefs had periſhed by his hand.
I ſaw his madneſs and ſtill urged him on,
That he might fall into the ſnare I laid:
Tired with his ſlaughter, now he binds in chains
The living victim, drives the captive herd
Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men:
There beats with many a ſtripe the helpleſs foe,
But I will ſhew thee this moſt glaring phrenzy,
That to the Græcians what thy eyes beheld
Thou mayſt report; be confident, nor fear
His utmoſt malice; I ſhall turn his ſight
Aſkant from thee. Ajax, what, ho! come forth,
Thou who do'ſt bind in chains thy captive foes,
Ajax, I ſay, come forth before the portal!

ULY. What wouldſt thou do, Minerva? Do not call him.

MIN. What ſhould Ulyſſes fear?

ULY. O! by the Gods
I do intreat thee, let him ſtay within.

MIN. But wherefore? Thou haſt ſeen him here before.

ULY. He ever was, and is my deadlieſt foe.

MIN.

There beats with many a ſtripe, &c. In alluſion to this circumſtance, the title of the play in the original is, Αιας Μαστιγοφορος, or, Ajax the whip-bearer; ſo called either by Sophocles himſelf, or ſome of the antient commentators, to diſtinguiſh it from Ajax the Locrian, another tragedy written by him, but now loſt. As the appellation of whip-bearer, however happily adapted to an Attic, might not ſo well ſuit the delicacy of an Engliſh ear, I have taken the liberty to ſink it upon my readers, who, I apprehend, will be content with the title of Ajax only. Mr. Brumoy, for the ſame reaſon, has omitted it, and calls it, in his tranſlation, Ajax furieux.

MIN. Oh! but to laugh an enemy to ſcorn
Is mirth moſt grateful.
ULY. I had rather ſtill
He came not here.
MIN. And art thou then afraid
To ſee a madman?
ULY. I ſhould little dread
The ſight of Ajax in his better mind.
MIN. He will not ſee thee be thou e'er ſo near.
ULY. Impoſſible! his eyes are ſtill the ſame.
MIN. But I ſhall throw a veil of darkneſs o'er them.
ULY. By powers immortal all things may be done.
MIN. Wait then in ſilence till he comes.
ULY. I will;
And yet 'twere better to retire.
MIN. What, ho!
Ajax, again I call thee, wherefore pay'ſt thou
So little reverence to thy guardian power?

AJAX,

'Twere better to retire, &c. Sophocles has cloſely copied his great maſter, Homer, in the character of Ulyſſes, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumſpection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generoſity. He is extremely loth, we may obſerve, to truſt himſelf with Ajax, even though he had a goddeſs to protect him. I had rather, ſays he, after all, be a little farther off. Hic (ſays Camerarius in a note on this paſſage) eſt timor prudentiæ, this is but a prudent fear, for who would wiſh to meet a madman? Brumoy, however, is of another opinion; il me paroit (ſays he) un peu lache, & J'avoue que ce trait n'eſt pas à la louange d'Ulyſſe ni de Sophocle; mais le roi d'Ithaque etoit trop connu pour le deguiſer aux ſpectateurs, & les idées de prudence & de bravoure étoient alors bien differentes de celles d'aujourd'huy. To ſay the truth, prudence among the antients ſeems to have favoured a little of cowardice, as their courage and valour bordered rather too cloſely on ſavageneſs and brutality.

AJAX, MINERVA, ULYSSES.

AJAX. Hail to the daughter of great Jove! to thee,
Minerva, hail! thou com'ſt in happy hour,
For I will crown thee with the golden ſpoils,
Which I have gained by thy aſſiſting hand.

MIN. Well haſt thou ſpoke; but ſay, has Ajax dipped
His ſpear in Græcian blood?

AJAX. It is my boaſt;
I'll not deny it.

MIN. Did th' Atridæ feel
Thy vengeful arm?

AJAX. They never will again
Diſhonour Ajax.

MIN. If I underſtand thee,
They are both dead.

AJAX. They are; now let them come
And take my arms away.

MIN. But tell me, Ajax;
Laertes' ſon, hath he eſcaped thy wrath?

AJAX. Talk'ſt thou of him, that fox accurſed?

MIN. I mean
Thy foe, Ulyſſes.

AJAX. Oh! he is my captive,
The faireſt of my ſpoils, I have him here;
He ſhall not periſh yet.

MIN. What 'vantage then
Mean'ſt thou to draw from his confinement?

AJAX. Firſt,
I'll have him bound to the pillar.

MIN. And, what then
Wouldſt thou inflict?

AJAX. His limbs all purpled o'er
With many a bloody ſtripe, he ſhall be ſlain.

MIN.

MIN. Do not torment him thus.
AJAX. In all things elſe,
Minerva, would I gratify thy will,
But this, and this alone, muſt be his fate.
MIN. Since 'tis ſo pleaſing to thee, be it ſo,
Nor quit thy purpoſe.
AJAX. I muſt to my work;
Thus, great Minerva, may'ſt thou ever ſmile
Propitious on me, and aſſiſt thy Ajax! [*Exit.*

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MIN. Behold, Ulyſſes, here the mighty ſtrength
Of power divine: lived there a man more wiſe,
More famed for noble deeds than Ajax was?
ULY. None, none indeed; alas! I pity him;
E'en in a foe I pity ſuch diſtreſs,
For he is wedded to the worſt of woes:
His hapleſs ſtate reminds me of my own,
And tells me that frail mortals are no more
Than a vain image and an empty ſhade.
MIN. Let ſuch examples teach thee to beware
Againſt the Gods thou utter aught profane:
And if perchance in riches or in power
Thou ſhin'ſt ſuperior, be not inſolent;
For, know, a day ſufficeth to exalt

Since 'tis ſo pleaſing to thee. The Greek is, ἐπειδὴ σοι τέρψις, which literally tranſlated, anſwers to our phraſe, ſince it is thy pleaſure: but this is generally made uſe of by us from an inferior to a ſuperior, and conſequently would be improper from Minerva to Ajax, where it is the direct contrary; ſhe only means to ſay, ſince it gives thee ſuch extraordinary delight and ſatisfaction; which ſenſe I have endeavoured to expreſs as conciſely as poſſible in the tranſlation.

Or to depreſs the ſtate of mortal man:
The wiſe and good are by the gods beloved,
But thoſe who practiſe evil they abhor. *Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

To thee, O Ajax, valiant ſon
Of illuſtrious Telamon,
Monarch of the ſea-girt iſle,
Fair Salamis, if fortune ſmile
On thee, I raiſe the tributary ſong,
For praiſe and virtue ſtill to thee belong:
But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove,
Græcian ſlander blaſts thy fame,
And foul reproach attaints thy name,
Then do I tremble like the fearful dove.

So,

To thee, O! Ajax. The chorus is formed, with great propriety, of Salaminian ſoldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who, having heard the report, already ſpread through the army, of Ajax's madneſs, and the ſlaughter of the cattle, expreſs the deepeſt concern for their unhappy maſter. If the fact aſſerted was true, ſuch, ſay they, was the will of the gods who had deprived him of his ſenſes; he is therefore to be pitied, not condemned; if, as they are rather inclined to believe, it was only a ſtory invented by the artful Ulyſſes, on purpoſe to calumniate him, it behoved the hero immediately to appear and contradict it: of this, interſperſed with moral reflections, conſiſts the firſt chorus, which according to the commentators was a ſong between the acts; the French call it intermede: the chorus before us is made up, in the original, of anapæſts, with a ſtrophe, antiſtrophe, and epode; I have thrown the whole into one irregular ode of eight ſtanzas, and divided them as the change of ſentiment ſeemed to point out and direct me; whether it be done properly muſt be left to the determination of the reader.

If fortune ſmile. The original is σε μεν ευ πρασσοντ', quando bene tecum agitur: ſo we ſay a man *does well,* when he ſucceeds in the world.

So, the laſt unhappy night,
Clamours loud did reach mine ear
And filled my anxious heart with fear,
Which talked of Greæcian cattle ſlain,
And Ajax maddening o'er the plain,
Pleaſed at his prey, rejoicing at the ſight.

Thus falſe Ulyſſes can prevail,
Whiſpering to all his artful tale,
His tale alas! too willingly received;
Whilſt thoſe who hear are glad to know,
And happy to inſult thy woe,
For, who aſperſe the great are eaſily believed.

The poor, like us, alone are free
From the darts of calumny,
Whilſt envy ſtill attends on high eſtate:
Small is the aid which we can lend,
Without the rich and powerful friend;
The great ſupport the low, the low aſſiſt the great;
But 'tis a truth which fools will never know;
From ſuch alone the clamours came
Which ſtrove to hurt thy ſpotleſs fame,
Whilſt we can only weep, and not relieve thy woe.

Happy to 'ſcape thy piercing ſight,
Behold them wing their rapid flight,
As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly,
Sudden again ſhouldſt thou appear,
The cowards would be mute with fear,
And all their cenſures in a moment die.

Cynthia,

Laſt unhappy night. Gr. της φθιμενης νυκτος, the night that is periſhed; a remarked Greek idiom.

Cynthia, goddeſs of the grove,
Daughter of immortal Jove,
To whom at Tauris frequent altars riſe,
Indignant might inſpire the deed,
And bid the guiltleſs cattle bleed,
Deprived of incenſe due, and wonted ſacrifice.
Perhaps, ſad cauſe of all our grief and ſhame!
The god of war with brazen ſhield,
For fancied injuries in the field,
Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name.

For never in his perfect mind,
Had Ajax been to ill inclined,
On flocks and herds his rage had never ſpent;
It was inflicted from above:
May Phœbus and all-powerful Jove
Avert the crime, or ſtop the puniſhment!
If to th' Atridæ the bold fiction came
From Siſyphus' deteſted race,
No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy fame.

Ajax,

To whom at Tauris, &c. Ταυροπολαν, id eſt, Taurivagam vocant Dianam (ſays Camerarius) vel quod in Taurica culta fuerit, vel propter terriculamenta nocturna Hecates, vel neſcio quam ob cauſam, that is, they call Diana Ταυροπολα, either becauſe ſhe was worſhipped at Tauris, or becauſe of the nocturnal incantations of Hecate, or for I know not what reaſon (which by the bye is an excellent way of ſolving the difficulty) the firſt reaſon however is moſt probably the true one, which I have therefore adopted in the tranſlation.

From Siſyphus' deteſted race. Or, in other words, from Ulyſſes, whom the chorus means to reproach as the baſtard ſon of Siſyphus; concerning which circumſtance, the antients, who had, perhaps, as well as ourſelves, a little taſte for ſcandal, tell the following tale;

Ajax, thy too long repoſe
Adds new vigour to thy foes,
As flames from aiding winds ſtill fiercer grow;
Whilſt the looſe laugh, and ſhameleſs lie,
And all their bitter calumny,
With double weight oppreſs, and fill our hearts with woe.

ACT II.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

SONS of Erectheus, of Athenian race,
Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax,
Oppreſſed with grief behold a wretched woman,
Far from her native ſoil, appointed here
To watch your hapleſs lord, and mourn his fate.

CHO.

Anticlea, the mother of Ulyſſes, in her journey towards her betroathed huſband, Laertes, was violently ſeized on by Siſyphus, king of Corinth, and deflowered by him. Ulyſſes was ſuppoſed to have been the fruit of this ſtolen embrace, though Laertes, who afterwards married the lady, was obliged to educate him as his own. There is likewiſe another ſtory, to be met with in the ſcholia, of her being proſtituted to Siſyphus, by her father Autolicus. Both Æſchylus and Euripides mention the baſtardy of Ulyſſes; Sophocles alſo repeats it in the Philoctetes.

Sons of Erectheus, &c. The Athenians, who were remarkably proud of their antiquity, ſtiled themſelves χθονιοι αυτοχθονες, as ſprung from the earth, the original natives of that ſpot, and coeval with the ſoil they inhabited. Erectheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcan, and the earth; from him the Athenians boaſted their deſcent, and they could not well go higher: Salamis was not far from Athens; Sophocles therefore ſalutes the followers of Ajax, by the name of the Athenians, and takes this opportunity, to indulge the vanity of his countrymen, by calling them

CHO. What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?
Say, daughter of Teleutas, for with thee
His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns
To ſhare the nuptial bed, and therefore thou
Canſt beſt inform us.

TEC. How ſhall I declare
Sadder than death th' unutterable woe!
This night, with madneſs ſeized, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed; within thou mayſt behold
The tents o'erſpread with bloody carcaſes
Of cattle ſlain, the victims of his rage.

CHO. Sad news indeed thou bring'ſt of that brave man,
A dire diſeaſe, and not by human aid

To

the ſons of Erectheus: for joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer;

With theſe appear the Salaminian bands,
Whom the gigantic Telamon commands;
In twelve black ſhips, to Troy they ſteer their courſe,
And with the great Athenians join their force.

POPE's Homer, b. 2. l. 670.

Daughter of Teleutas, &c. Tecmeſſa, who is here introduced as the wife of Ajax, fell to him, as Briſeis to Achilles, by the fate of war; her father Teleutas, was a petty king in Phrygia, whoſe dominions being taken and plundered by Ajax, the daughter became his captive, and was afterwards advanced to his bed, in quality, we may ſuppoſe, of his chief ſultana; by her, we find, he had a child, whom the father named Euryſaces, from ευρυς σακος, a broad ſhield, in memory of that part of his own armour, by which, as we have before obſerved, he was ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed; this child is afterwards brought on the ſtage, a circumſtance, artfully introduced by the poet, to heighten the diſtreſs of the piece. Horace, in his catalogue of famous miſtreſſes, has not forgot our heroine.

Movit Ajacem Telamone natum,
Forma captivæ dominum Tecmeſſæ. Lib. 9, Od. 4.

To be removed; already Greece hath heard
And wondering crouds repeat the dreadful tale:
Alas! I fear the event! I fear me much,
Leſt with their flocks and herds the ſhepherds ſlain,
Againſt himſelf he lift his murtherous hand.

TEC. Alas! this way he led his captive ſpoils,
And ſome he ſlew, and others tore in ſunder;
From out the flock two rams of ſilver hue
He choſe, from one the head and tongue divided,
He caſt them from him; then the other chained
Faſt to the pillar, with a doubled rein
Bore cruel ſtripes, and bittereſt execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inſpired
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

CHO. Now then, my friends, (for ſo the time demands)
Each o'er his head ſhould caſt the mournful veil,
And inſtant fly, or to our ſhips repair,
And ſail with ſpeed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridæ; death may be our lot,
And we ſhall meet an equal puniſhment
With him whom we lament, our frantic lord.

TEC. He raves not now; but like the ſouthern blaſt,
When lightnings ceaſe and all the ſtorm is o'er,
Grows calm again; yet to his ſenſe reſtored,
He feels new griefs; for, O! to be unhappy,
And know ourſelves alone the guilty cauſe
Of all our ſorrows, is the worſt of woes.

CHO. Yet if his rage ſubſide we ſhould rejoice:
The ill removed, we ſhould remove our care.

TEC. Hadſt thou then rather, if the choice were given,
Thyſelf at eaſe, behold thy friend in pain,
Than with thy friend be joined in mutual ſorrow?

CHO. The double grief is ſure the moſt oppreſſive.

TEC.

TEC. Therefore, though not diſtempered, I am wretched.
CHO. I underſtand thee not.
TEC. The noble Ajax,
Whilſt he was mad, was happy in his phrenzy,
And yet the while affected me with grief
Who was not ſo; but now his rage is o'er,
And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
Himſelf is almoſt dead with grief, and I
Not leſs unhappy than I was before;
Is it not double then?
CHO. It is indeed;
And much I fear the wrath of angry heaven,
If from his madneſs ceaſed he yet receive
No kind relief.
TEC. 'Tis ſo; and 'twere moſt fit
You knew it well.
CHO. Say then how it began;
For like thyſelf we feel for his misfortunes.
TEC. Since you partake the ſorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all; know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening taper were expired,
Snatching his ſword, he ſeemed as if he meant
To roam abroad; I ſaw and chid him for it:
What wouldſt thou do, I cried, my deareſt Ajax?
Unaſked, uncalled for, whither wouldſt thou go?
No trumpet ſounds to battle, the whole hoſt
Is wrapt in ſleep; then did he anſwer me
With brief but ſharp rebuke, as he was wont,
" Woman, thy ſex's nobleſt ornament
" Is ſilence;" thus reproved, I ſaid no more;
Then forth he ruſhed alone, where, and for what,
I knew not; but returning, he brought home
In chains the captive herd, in pieces ſome

He

He tore, whilſt others bound like ſlaves he laſhed
Indignant; then out at the portal ran,
And with ſome ſhadow ſeemed to hold diſcourſe;
Againſt th' Atridæ, and Ulyſſes, oft
Would he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice
That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs;
Then back he came; at length, by ſlow degrees,
His phrenzy ceaſed; when ſoon as he beheld
The tents o'erwhelmed with ſlaughter, he cried out,
And beat his brain; rolled o'er the bloody heaps
Of cattle ſlain, and tore his clotted hair,
Long fixed in ſilence: then, with horrid threats,
He bade me tell him all that had befallen,
And what he had been doing; I obeyed,
Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.
Inſtant he poured forth bittereſt lamentations,
Such as I ne'er had heard from him before,
For grief like that, he oft would ſay, betrayed
A weak and little mind, and therefore ever
When ſorrow came, refrained from loud complaint,
And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourned.
But ſinking now beneath this ſore diſtreſs,
He will not taſte of food or nouriſhment;

Silent

With ſome ſhadow, &c. This alludes to his converſation with Minerva, in the firſt act; Tecmeſſa, we may ſuppoſe, was in a chamber adjoining to them, and overheard their diſcourſe; but as Minerva had rendered herſelf and Ulyſſes inviſible, Tecmeſſa could not imagine whom he was talking to; ſhe adds this circumſtance, therefore, to the other ſymptoms of his madneſs. There is a paſſage not unlike this in Hamlet. See act 3, ſc. 10.

He will not taſte of food. The abſtinence of Ajax on this occaſion, which, we may imagine, was not peculiar to himſelf, ſeems to be among thoſe cuſtoms, which the Grecians borrowed from

Silent he ſits, amid the ſlaughtered cattle,
Or, if he ſpeaks, utters ſuch dreadful words
As ſhew a mind, intent on ſomething ill.
Now then, my friends, for therefore came I hither,
O! if ye have the power, aſſiſt me now;
Perhaps ye may; for oft th' afflicted man
Will liſten to the counſels of a friend.

CHO. O! daughter of Teleutas, horrible
Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,
Thus raving, and thus miſerable.

AJAX. [within, groans] Oh!

TEC. Louder you'll hear him ſoon; marked ye, my friends,
How deep his groans?

AJAX. [within] Oh! me!

CHO. He ſeems to rave,
Or mourns, reflecting on his madneſs paſt.

AJAX. [within] Boy! boy!

TEC. Alas! he calls Euriſaces,
Where art thou, child? What would he have with thee?

AJAX. [within] Teucer, 'tis thee I call, where art thou, Teucer?
Still muſt he chaſe his prey, whilſt Ajax dies?

CHO. He ſeems of perfect mind—open the doors,
Let him come forth—who knows but ſight of us
May keep him ſo.

TEC.

the eaſtern nations: we read in ſcripture, that when David was afflicted for the loſs of his child, he would not eat bread, nor drink wine; it appears from this, and many other paſſages in Sophocles, that he was no ſtranger to the manners and phraſeology of the orientals: though I would not, on this occaſion, venture to affirm, that David and Sophocles were but one perſon, in imitation of my learned predeceſſor, Duport, who ſo poſitively aſſerted, that Homer and Solomon were the ſame.

TEC. I'll open them——now ſee
[*The doors are thrown open, and Ajax diſcovered.*
Your maſter there, and judge of his condition.

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX. My dear companions, who alone deſerve
The name of friends, ye ſee the dreadful ſtorm
How it o'erwhelms me.

CHO. What thou ſaidſt, alas! [*aſide to Tecmeſſa.*]
Was but too true; he ſeems indeed diſtracted.

AJAX. My fellow-ſailors! whoſe aſſiſting hand
Plied the tough oar, and led me through the main,
From you alone can I expect to meet
Or love or friendſhip; therefore ſhew it now,
And kill me.

My dear companions, &c. From line 347, to line 427, of the original, inſtead of the common metre, it is all ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, which was moſt probably ſet to muſic, and ſung in the manner of the chorus: this was often done by Sophocles, and the other tragic writers, in the more pathetic and impaſſioned parts of the drama, and met, as we may imagine, with a favourable reception in the Grecian theatre; but as queſtion and anſwer, put into ode or rhyme, would have a different effect amongſt us, I have preſerved the blank verſe, in this, and ſome other parallel paſſages, as more proper for dialogue.

Seems indeed diſtracted. Ajax is here repreſented as ſitting alone in his tent, juſt recovered from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it: what the chorus here obſerves concerning his diſtraction, doth not, therefore, proceed from any thing that he ſays, but probably from a wildneſs in his looks and geſture, which ſtill remained, and induced them to believe that his diſtemper was not quite removed. Ajax, indeed, as Brumoy obſerves, ſeems, throughout this whole ſcene, like the ſea after a ſtorm, whoſe waves are ſtill agitated, and ſubſiding, by degrees, into calmneſs and tranquillity.

CHO. Talk not thus, nor thus increaſe
By added woes thy dreadful malady.
AJAX. Doſt thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for ſtrength renowned,
And dauntleſs courage in the bloody field,
Doſt thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach muſt he ſuſtain!
TEC. O Ajax,
My lord, my maſter, do not talk thus ſadly. [gone?
AJAX. [to Tecmeſſa.] Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be
TEC. Oh me!
CHO. Be patient; by the Gods let me intreat thee.
Be more compoſed.
AJAX. Wretch that I was, to let
The curſt Atridæ ſcape, and ſhed the blood
Of harmleſs cattle!
CHO. But why ſorrow thus
For what is paſt, and cannot be recalled?
AJAX. How will that ſubtle inſtrument of ill,
Laertes' prying ſon, inſult me now,
And ſmile at my misfortunes!
CHO. That muſt be
As ſeems moſt fitting to the Gods; from them
Or grief or joy muſt flow.
AJAX. O would to heaven
That I could ſee him! wretched as I am!

CHO.

Wilt thou not home, &c. The mind of Ajax is ſo diſturbed, that he returns the tenderneſs of his wife with peeviſhneſs and anger. I have endeavoured in the tranſlation to render it with that brevity and ſharpneſs which paſſion generally makes uſe of. The ladies may obſerve the modeſty of Tecmeſſa's behaviour; ſhe anſwers him only with a ſigh.

CHO. This is no time for boasting: seest thou not
How very weak thou art?

AJAX. Almighty Jove!
My great progenitor! O grant me this!
Grant me to slay that hateful, talking slave,
With the proud princes; then, well pleased, myself
Should perish last.

TEC. O! if thou pray'st for death,
Pray too for mine; for wherefore should I live
When thou art gone?

AJAX. O darkness, my best light
And hope! O wrap me in thy friendly shade,
A willing guest! I dare not look for help,
Or from the Gods above, or men below:
The powerful daughter of eternal Jove
To death devotes me: whither can I fly,
Or where remain, my fame and glory lost
In this sad phrenzy? left without a friend,
And the whole army bent on my destruction!

TEC. Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear such words,
Which Ajax never would have spoke before!

AJAX. Ye well-known floods that roll into the main,
Ye caves and forests by the rocky shore!
Years heaped on years fast by the walls of Troy
Have ye detained me, but no longer now
Amongst the living shall ye ever see
The hapless Ajax; this remember all:
Nor shall thy neighbouring waves, Scamander, still
To Greece beneficent, behold me more:

Jove, my great progenitor! Ajax's genealogical table stands thus: Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Jupiter therefore was his great grandfather.

Troy never ſaw, forgive the boaſtful word,
A braver, nobler foe, than Ajax was,
Though now diſhonoured thus, and thus oppreſſed.

CHO. I would not have thee thus lament thy woes,
And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,
So hard thy lot.

AJAX. Who would have thought my name
Would e'er ſo well have ſuited my condition!
O! I have reaſon to lament indeed,
For ſure there is not ſuch a wretch as Ajax!
Long ſince at Troy my valiant father fought,
And to his native land, with glory crowned,
Bore back the meed of his diſtinguiſhed virtues:
Nor leſs renowned for gallant deeds was once
His hapleſs ſon, though now he periſh thus
Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know,
Were he alive, and to beſtow his arms
On him who beſt deſerved the prize, to me,
And me alone, would judge the great reward:
But little deemed th' Atridæ worth like mine,
And therefore gave them to that vile impoſtor,
Author of every evil work, Ulyſſes. Had

Who would have thought my name, &c. To know the meaning of this paſſage, the reader ſhould underſtand Greek; it being nothing more than a poor pun on the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with *Ai*, an exclamation like our Oh! expreſſive of pain and ſorrow. It is, to ſay the truth, not very worthy of Sophocles, and much of a piece with Shakeſpear's

This is Rome indeed,
And room enough. JUL. CÆSAR.

But our Author is not often guilty of this, and ſhould therefore be pardoned for it. Ovid, who loved trifling, has alſo played upon the name of Ajax. See Met. lib. 13.

To lament. Another pun; the word αιαζειν ſignifying to lament.

Had not my mind been wrought on by ſome power
Superior, and my eyes averted from them,
They had not lived to give another ſentence;
But Jove's great daughter, the invincible,
The dreadful Pallas, turned my arm aſide,
Juſt raiſed againſt them, and inſpired me thus
With horrid rage to dip my murtherous hand
In blood of guiltleſs cattle: they, mean time,
Smile at the danger ſcaped, and triumph o'er me:
But, when the Gods oppoſe us, valour bends
To cowardice, and ſtrength to weakneſs yields:
What, then, can Ajax? hateful to the Gods,
By Troy deteſted, and by Greece forſaken!
Shall I go leave the Atridæ here alone
To fight their cauſe, and ſeek my native land?
But how ſhall I appear before my father,
How will he bear to ſee his Ajax thus
Spoiled of his honours! he who ever crowned
With glory ſits: it muſt not, cannot be.
What if I ruſh amid the Trojan hoſt,
And with my ſingle arm oppoſe them all,
Do ſomething noble, and as nobly periſh!
But that would pleaſe th' Atridæ, therefore never
Shall it be done: No, I will do a deed
To ſhew my father that I ſtill deſerve
The name of ſon, and emulate my ſire:
When life but teems with unremitted woes,
'Tis poor in man to wiſh a longer date:
For what can day on day, and year on year,
But put off wiſhed-for death, and lengthen pain?
Of little worth is he who ſtill depends
On fruitleſs hope; for it becomes the brave

To live with honour, or to die with glory!
Ye have my thoughts.

CHO. Thoughts not unworthy of thee,
Ajax; but quit, O! quit thy horrid purpoſe,
And yield thee to thy friends.

TEC. My lord, my maſter,
My deareſt Ajax, dreadful are the ills
Which cruel fortune brings on human kind:
Of nobleſt race (a better Phrygia boaſts not)
Tecmeſſa was, and from a father ſprung,
Happy and free, though now a wretched ſlave;
For ſo the Gods and thy all-conquering arm
Decreed: but ſince, partaker of thy bed,
Thou know'ſt I ever have with tendereſt care
Watched o'er thee: therefore, by domeſtic Jove!
Here I intreat thee, by the ſacred tie
That binds us, let me not with foul reproach
And bitter ſcorn be taunted by thy foes,
When they ſurround me, as I know they will:
For, O! when thou ſhalt die, that very day
The Greeks with violence will ſeize on me;
Tecmeſſa, then, and thy loved ſon, ſhall eat
The bread of ſlavery; then ſome haughty lord,

Inſulting

My lord, my maſter, &c. This ſpeech of Tecmeſſa's has been deſervedly applauded by the critics as one of the moſt maſterly and pathetic in the whole tragedy. Ce ne ſont pas (ſays Brumoy) de ces ſentimens delicats & recherchéz qu'on a mis depuis à la mode ſur le théâtre; ce ſont les expreſſions vives l'amitié conjugal. This ſcene, as well as that which follows between Ajax and his ſon, is manifeſtly imitated from the parting of Hector and Andromache in the 6th book of Homer's Iliad, to which I refer my readers. The copy is not, perhaps, much inferior to the original.

The bread of ſlavery. This is literally tranſlated; the expreſſion

Inſulting loud, ſhall cry, behold the wife
Of Ajax, once the pride of all our hoſt,
How is ſhe fallen! from envied happineſs
To ſervitude and woe! ſuch vile upbraidings
Oft ſhall I hear, on thee and on thy race
Caſting foul ſhame: O! then relent, my Ajax;
Think on thy father in the vale of years,
Think on thy aged mother, who with vows
Inceſſant prays the Gods to ſend thee back,
Safe to thy native land! pity thy ſon,
Without a father in his tender youth
To form his mind, left to th' unfriendly hands
Of thoſe who love him not: Alas! what woes
Wilt thou bequeath to me, and to thy child!
I have no hope, no ſtay, but thee alone!
Thy hand deſtroyed my country, and my mother:
Death ſnatched my father to the realms below;
Deprived of thee, what country will receive me,
Or where ſhall I ſubſiſt? Thou art my all,
My only ſafeguard: do not, do not leave me!
Nought ſo becomes a man as gratitude
For good received, and noble deeds are ſtill
The offspring of benevolence, whilſt he
With whom remembrance dies of bleſſings paſt,
Is vile and worthleſs.

CHO. O! that thou couldſt feel
Pity like mine for this unhappy woman!
Then wouldſt thou ſay her words deſerve thy praiſe.

is much in the ſtile of the ſcriptures, where we meet with the bread of ſorrow, the bread of wickedneſs, the bread of ſincerity, and the like.

AJAX. And praiſed ſhe ſhall be, if ſhe but perform
What I require.

TEC. In all will I obey thee,
My deareſt Ajax!

AJAX. I would ſee my child;
Let him be brought.

TEC. I hid him from thy ſight
Becauſe of———

AJAX. My diſtemper, was it not?

TEC. It was: I feared, indeed, thou mightſt deſtroy him.

AJAX. And well thou mightſt: a deed like that became
My ſad condition.

TEC. Therefore, to prevent it,
I kept him from thee.

AJAX. I approve thy caution.

TEC. What wouldſt thou have me do?

AJAX. Let me behold
And ſpeak to him.

TEC. He is not far from hence,
The ſervants have him in their care.

AJAX. Then why
May I not ſee him?

TEC. Boy! thy father calls thee:
Let ſome one bring him hither.

AJAX. Is he coming?
Doth he not hear thee?

TEC. They have brought him to thee.

[Enter ſervants with Euryſaces.]

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

AJAX. Bring him this way: for if he be the ſon
Of Ajax, the freſh blood that hangs about me
Will not affright him; he muſt learn like me
In earlieſt years the ſavage laws of war,

And

And be inured to ſcenes of death and ſlaughter:
Mayſt thou, my boy, be happier than thy father!
In all things elſe it will be no diſgrace
To copy me: I envy thee, my child,
For that thou ſeeſt not thy own wretchedneſs;
The happineſs of life is not to know.
Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain,
Till time ſhall teach thee what it is to grieve
And to rejoice; then muſt thou ſhew thy foes
From whom thou art deſcended: may the breath
Of life, mean time, nouriſh thy tender frame,
That thou mayſt prove a comfort to thy mother!
I know there's not a Grecian that will dare
Inſult thee, when thy father is no more;
For I ſhall leave thee to the beſt of guardians,
The faithful Teucer, who, far from thee now,
Sent forth by Greece, repels th' invading foe.
Of you, my friends, companions of the war,
The only boon I aſk, is, that ye urge
This laſt requeſt to Teucer, ſay, I begged
That ſtraight to Telamon and Eribœa,
My aged parents, he would bear my child,
To be the joy of their declining years,
Till death ſhall call them to the ſhades below:
Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague,
Ulyſſes, e'er be made the prize of glory
For rival chiefs: but do thou take, my boy,
[turning to Euryſaces.
The ſevenfold, vaſt, impenetrable ſhield,
Whoſe name thou bear'ſt; the reſt be buried with me.

Take

The reſt be buried with me. The cuſtom of burying the arms of deceaſed warriors in the ſame grave with them, is very antient, and is practiſed amongſt the Indians at this day. This whole ſpeech of

Take hence the child with ſpeed; nor in the tents
Let there be wailings: Women ever love
To brood o'er ſorrows, and indulge their woe.
Shut to the door. The wound that muſt be cut,
No wiſe phyſician will attempt to heal
With incantation, elegy, or ſong.

CHO. I tremble when I hear thee threatening thus
With ſharp and piercing voice.

TEC. Alas! my lord,
What wilt thou do?

AJAX. Gueſs not; inquire not of me;
Be ſilent, and be wiſe; it will become thee.

TEC. How am I tortured! by the Gods I beg thee,
By our dear child, do not deſtroy us both.

AJAX. Thou doſt perplex me; why revere the Gods?
I am not bound to it, for I owe them nothing.

TEC. Be not ſo impious.

AJAX. Talk to thoſe will hear thee.

TEC. Art thou reſolved then?

AJAX. 'Tis too much; thy grief
Grows troubleſome.

TEC. Alas! my lord, I fear——

AJAX. [to the Chorus.] Will ye not take her hence?

TEC. O! by the Gods
I beg thee, be perſuaded.

AJAX.

Ajax, it is obſerved by the commentators, carries with it the air and form of his laſt will and teſtament; he gives orders to his wife and family, as a man immediately about to quit the world: this raiſes the paſſion of pity in the ſpectators, and prepares them for the cataſtrophe.

Incantation, elegy, and ſong. The Greek word ἐπῳδὴ is here uſed by Sophocles, for a charm or incantation, a method of curing diſeaſes frequently made uſe of by the antients.

AJAX. Thou art mad
To think thy words will ever change my purpoſe.

[*Exeunt.*

ODE

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O happieſt, beſt abode, my native iſle,
Fair Salamis, encompaſſed by the ſea,
On thee whilſt Gods and men indulgent ſmile,
My country, O behold and pity me!
A long, long time on Ida's plain,
Thus doomed inglorious to remain,
While circling years roll o'er my wretched head;
New terrors ſtill affright me here,
Still is my heart appalled with fear,
Leſt I ſhould viſit ſoon the manſions of the dead.

ANTISTROPHE.

The woes of Ajax too imbitter mine,
The braveſt leader of the Grecian hoſt,
Untimely viſited by wrath divine,
And in the deſperate, cruel phrenzy loſt.
There was a time when, ſent by thee,
He gained the wreath of victory,
Though now his weeping friends lament his fall
Th' ungrateful chiefs revere no more
The virtues they admired before;
His gallant deeds are now forgotten all.

STROPHE,

Change my purpoſe. Ajax, we muſt here ſuppoſe, breaks from Tecmeſſa, and retires: ſhe goes out, and the chorus remain on the ſtage, to lament their own unhappy condition, and expreſs their fears for Ajax.

STROPHE II.

Weighed down with years, when thou in hoary age
Unhappy mother, ſhalt theſe tidings hear
Of the dear Ajax, and his cruel rage,
How wilt thou weep and wail with grief ſincere!
Not like the plaintive nightingale
That warbles ſweet her tender tale,
But with loud ſhrieks of horrible deſpair:
With ſharpeſt anguiſh ſore oppreſſed,
Then ſhalt thou beat thy aged breaſt,
And in deep ſorrow rend thy wild diſhevelled hair.

ANTISTROPHE II.

'Tis better far to die, than hopeleſs ſtill
Of cure, to languiſh under ſore diſeaſe;
When mortals ſuffer ſuch diſtinguiſhed ill,
The ſilent tomb is liberty and eaſe.
Ajax, the pride of all our hoſt,
His antient fame and glory loſt,
Sinks down at laſt o'erwhelmed with foul diſgrace:
How will his hapleſs father bear
His ſon's diſtreſsful fate to hear,
E'en ſuch as never fell on Æacus' race.

ACT III.

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX.

STILL are the ſecret things of man revealed,
And what is known, again in darkneſs hid,

By

Act 3. Brumoy, in oppoſition to all the critics, tranſlators and commentators, and without aſſigning any reaſon, extends this act to the end of the next chorus, and begins the third with the arrival of the meſſenger from Teucer; which makes the diviſion of the acts very unequal, the ſecond containing, in the original, upwards

By endleſs and immeaſurable time;
And nothing is there but in length and days
May come to paſs; e'en ſacred oaths are broken,
And the fixed mind, perverſe and obſtinate,
Subdued by time: I, who like hardened ſteel
Was late inflexible, am ſoftened now
To pity and remorſe by this dear woman;
I cannot bear to leave her here a widow
Amidſt her foes, or to forſake my child,
A helpleſs orphan: No, I will retire
Along the ſhore, and ſeek the running ſtream,
Avert the wrath of angry heaven, and waſh
My crimes away; there haply ſhall I find
Some unfrequented ſpot where I may hide
This fatal weapon, this deſtructive ſword;
O! I will bury it deep in earth, that none
May ſee it more, but night and Erebus
Preſerve it ſtill from every mortal eye.
E'er ſince that hapleſs day, when from the hand
Of Hector I received this dreadful boon,
Nought have I had from Greece but pain and woe:
True is the adage, " from the hands of foes,
" Gifts are not gifts, but injuries moſt fatal."
Hereafter will I yield me to the Gods

And

of five hundred lines, and the third not above one; but as I obſerved in the diſſertation, the cuſtom of mincing the antient tragedy into five acts, is merely arbitrary; and without any foundation, as it was moſt probably one continued act, extending itſelf through the whole drama.

This fatal weapon. Ajax, who is ſecretly reſolved to deſtroy himſelf, ſays this to prevent the ſuſpicions of his wife and friends, from his carrying his ſword out with him: the ſpectators plainly ſee his intent, by his induſtry to conceal it,

And the Atridæ; ſince they are my maſters,
'Tis meet that I obey them: all that is ſtrong
And mighty muſt ſubmit to powers ſuperior:
Doth not the ſnowy winter to the bloom
Of fruitful ſummer yield? and night obſcure,
When by white ſteeds Aurora drawn, lights up
The riſing day, ſubmiſſively retire?
The roaring ſea, long vext by angry winds,
Is lulled by milder zephyrs to repoſe,
And oft the fetters of all-conquering ſleep
Are kindly looſed to free the captive mind;
From nature, then, who thus inſtructs mankind,
Why ſhould not Ajax learn humility?
Long ſince I knew to treat my foe like one
Whom I hereafter as a friend might love,
If he deſerved it; and to love my friend
As if he ſtill might one day be my foe:
For little is the truſt we can repoſe
In human friendſhips: but to my intent;
Go thou, Tecmeſſa, and beſeech the Gods
To grant what I requeſt: do you perform
The ſame kind office; and when Teucer comes,
Tell him, the care of me and of my friends
I leave to him: whither I muſt, I muſt:
Obey my orders: wretched as I am,
Soon ſhall ye ſee me freed from all my woes. [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

Long ſince I knew, &c. Tully in his Lælius, ſive de Amicitia, diſclaims this ſelfiſh and worldly maxim as deſtructive of all friendſhip. The ſaying is generally attributed to the celebrated Bias, one of the ſeven ſages of Greece.

Soon ſhall ye ſee me, &c. The expreſſion, we may obſerve, is ambiguous, and the ſenſe left doubtful, on purpoſe to deceive the

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Now let ſounds of mirth and joy
Every bliſsful hour employ:
Borne on pleaſure's airy wing,
Io Pan! to thee we ſing:
Thee, whom on the rocky ſhore,
Wreck-ſcaped mariners adore,
Skilled the mazy dance to lead,
Teach, O! teach our feet to tread
The round which Cretan Cnoſſus knows,
At Nyſſa, which ſpontaneous roſe;
Pan, O! guide this tuneful throng,
While to thee we raiſe the ſong,
From Cyllene's ſnowy brow,
King of pleaſures, hear us now!
From thy mountains, O! appear!
Joy and happineſs are here:
And do thou, O! Delian king,
Now thy aid propitious bring!
O! from the Icarian ſea,
Come, Apollo, ſmile on me.

ANTISTROPHE

All our ſorrows now are o'er,
Grief and madneſs are no more:
See, the happy day appears,
Mighty Jove! that ends our fears;

Let

chorus, who, miſunderſtanding him, immediately on his leaving them, break out into a ſong of joy on his recovery. This beſides (as the commentators have remarked) gives time for Ajax to retire, before the arrival of the meſſenger.

Let us, free from every care,
Gladly to our ſhips repair:
Ajax now in ſweet repoſe
Sinks, forgetful of his woes;
Humbly to the Gods reſigned,
He devotes his better mind:
Time, that withers, can reſtore
Human pleaſures: now no more
Muſt we ſay our vows are vain!
Nought unhoped for ſhould remain;
Since, beyond our wiſhes, ſee
Ajax from his madneſs free;
'Gainſt th' Atridæ all his rage
See how milder thoughts aſſuage,
Bitter ſtrife and quarrels ceaſe;
All is harmony and peace.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. My friends, I bear you news of higheſt import;
From Myſia's rocky mountains hither comes
The noble Teucer; know, even now I ſaw him
Amid the Grecian hoſt, who, as he came,
Surrounded, and on every ſide poured forth
Reproaches on him; not a man but cried,
"Behold the brother of that frantic foe
"To Greece and to her council:" ſuch their rage
That they had well-nigh ſtoned him; ſwords were drawn,
And dire had been the conflict, but that ſome
Among the aged chiefs, by calm advice,
Appeaſed the ſtrife: but where is Ajax gone?
That I may tell him: from our maſters nought
Should be concealed.

CHO. He is not now within,

But

But juſt ſteps forth, as if on ſome new act
Intent, well-ſuited to his better mind.
MES. Alas! too late did Teucer ſend me here,
Or I am come too ſlowly.
CHO. Why regret
His abſence thus?
MES. 'Twas Teucer's ſtrict command
He ſhould be kept within the tent, nor ſtir
Till he arrived.
CHO. But, to his ſenſe reſtored,
He went to deprecate the wrath divine,
And expiate his offence.
MES. Thy words are vain,
If Chalcas propheſy aright.
CHO. What then
Did Chalcas ſay? Doſt thou know aught of this?
MES. Thus far I know, for I was witneſs of it:
Chalcas, retiring from th' aſſembled chiefs
Apart from the Atridæ, gently preſſed
The hand of Teucer, and in tendereſt friendſhip
Beſought him that by every human art
And means to be deviſed, he would prevent
Ajax's wandering forth this fatal day,
If he did ever wiſh to ſee him more:
This day alone, he ſaid, Minerva's wrath
Would laſt againſt him; oft the mighty fall
In deep affliction, ſmit by angry heaven,
When, mortal-born, to human laws they yield not
As mortals ought, ſubmiſſively: thus ſpake
The prophet, and long ſince was Ajax deemed
To have a mind diſturbed: when firſt he left
His native ſoil, be conqueror, O! my child,
His father ſaid, but conquer under God;

Impious and proud his anſwer was; "the worſt
"Of men (he cried) aſſiſted by the Gods
"May conquer, I ſhall do the work without them!"
Such were his boaſtings: and when Pallas once
With kind aſſiſtance urged him to the fight,
Dreadful and horrible was his reply;
"Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid,
"'Tis needleſs here; for know, where Ajax is,
"The foe will never come!" by words like theſe,
And pride ill-ſuited to a mortal's power,
Did he offend the vengeful deity;
But if he lives, we may preſerve him ſtill,
The Gods aſſiſting; ſo the prophet ſpake;
And Teucer bade me ſay, you all ſhould try
To keep him here; but if that cannot be,
And Chalcas judge aright, he is no more.

CHO. [to Tecmeſſa within] What ho! Tecmeſſa, moſt unhappy woman!
Come forth and hear the tidings that he brings,
They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

TEC. Scarce do I breathe from ſtill repeated woes,
And now again thou call'ſt me; wherefore? ſpeak.

CHO. This meſſenger hath brought us dreadful news
Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TEC. O! what is it?
Am I undone?

MES. I know not what thou art;
But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears
Are great for him.

TEC. Alás; he is; but, why?
How thou afflict'ſt me!

MES.

MES. Teucer hath forbid
His wandering thus alone.
TEC. But why forbade him?
And where is Teucer!
MES. He will ſoon be here:
He fears this fatal day.
TEC. Undone Teemeſſa!
Whence are his fears? who told him it would be fatal?
MES. The hiſtorian Chalcas did foretel, this day
To life or death would fix the fate of Ajax.
TEC. [to the Chorus.] Aſſiſt me, friends, in this diſtreſsful hour;
To Teucer haſte, and bring him to my aid;
Some to yon weſtern mountain bend your way,
And ſome to th' eaſt; find out which path he went:
Unhappy wanderer! O! he has deceived me,
His former love forgotten all, and gone!
What muſt we do, my child? I muſt not ſit
Inactive here: no, whereſoe'er I can
I'll go to ſearch him: let us haſte, my friends,
Quick, fly this inſtant, if we mean to ſave
The wretched Ajax ruſhing on deſtruction.
CHO. Behold us ready, not in word alone,
But bent with ſpeed to follow thee. Away.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

AJAX.

THERE ſtands my ſword, and fixed as it may beſt
Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector,
My worſt of foes, whom I deteſted ever:
The ſteel-devouring ſtone hath ſharpened well
Its keeneſt edge; buried in Trojan earth

It lies, and now in kindneſs ſeems prepared
To end my wretched life; thus far is well:
And now, O! Jove, for firſt to thee 'tis fit
We pay due honours, I addreſs my prayer;
I aſk not much; I aſk thee but to ſend
Some paſſing ſtranger here to bear the news
Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear,
That he may firſt behold, and take me hence,
Leſt by my foes diſcovered, I be caſt
A prey to dogs and birds; forbid it, Jove!
Thee too, great leader of departed ſouls,
Terreſtrial Hermes, thee I call, O! hear me;
With eaſy ſteps, and ſwift, conduct me ſafe
To my abode, ſoon as this fatal ſword
Shall reach my breaſt; and you, ye virgin powers,
From whom whate'er befals of human ill
Cannot be hid, ye goddeſſes revered,
Swift to purſue the guilty, O! behold
The wretched Ajax by th' Atridæ fall!
O! ſeize the murtherous! by my own ſad hand
As I ſhall periſh, let my foes be ſlain
By thoſe whom moſt they love! quick, fly, begone,
Ye vengeful furies, gorge yourſelves in blood,
Nor ſpare a man of all the Græcian hoſt;
And thou, O! ſun, who driv'ſt the flaming car
Along the vaulted ſky, when thou ſhalt ſee
My native ſoil, O! ſtop thy golden reins;
Tell the ſad ſtory to my hapleſs ſire,
And my afflicted mother; when ſhe hears
The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain
To weep my fate: the buſineſs muſt be done.
O! death: look on me, death; I come to thee:

Soon

Soon ſhall we meet: but thee, O! glorious day,
And yon bright charioteer the ſun, no more
Shall I behold, even now thou hear'ſt my laſt,
My dying words: O! light, O! ſacred ſoil
Of Salamis, my country, and her gods,
O! noble Athens, O! my loved companions,
Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy,
And you, my honoured parents, O! farewell!
'Tis the laſt word Ajax ſhall ſpeak on earth:
The reſt be uttered to the ſhades below.

[Ajax falls on his ſword and dies.

CHORUS.

SEMICHO. I. Labour on labour! toil on toil! O whither
Have we not wandered? yet no place informs us
Where Ajax is: but ſoft, I hear a voice.

SEMICHO. II. 'Twas ours, your friends.

SEMICHO. I. What news?

SEMICHO. II. We've ſearched along
The weſtern ſhore.

SEMICHO. I. And is he found?

SEMICHO. II. Alas!
We met with nought but toil; no ſight of him.

SEMICHO. I. We from the eaſt return with like ſucceſs;
For none have ſeen or heard of him that way.

SEMI. II. Who will inform us? who will ſay
Where cruel Ajax bent his way?
Will not the watchful hind, who, void of ſleep,
Hangs laborious o'er the deep?

The chorus, who had been in ſearch of Ajax, enter at different parts of the ſtage, having divided themſelves into two parts, the better to diſcover him; they meet as it were by chance, and aſk each other concerning him.

From high Olympus will no pitying god,
Will no kind Naiad of the flood,
If chance they ſee the cruel Ajax ſtray,
Tell us where he bent his way?
For O! 'tis dreadful, wearied thus, to rove,
Whilſt all our pains ſucceſsleſs prove
To reach the deſtined goal, or find the man we love.

TEC. [from within,] Alas! alas!

SEMICHO. I. Hark! from the neighbouring grove
I heard a voice.

SEMICHO. II. It is the wretched captive,
The wife of Ajax, the poor, ſad Tecmeſſa.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TEC. O! I am loſt, my friends, undone, deſtroyed!

CHO. Ha! what hath happened?

TEC. Ajax lies before me,
Slain by the ſword which he had buried here.

CHO. Fatal ſure was our return,
Thy untimely death to mourn,
Me, and all thy faithful train,
Cruel Ajax, haſt thou ſlain,
Sad event alas! to me!
Sadder, woman, ſtill to thee.

TEC.

O! I am loſt, &c. Tecmeſſa, as well as the chorus, alarmed by the prophecy of Chalcas, as recounted by the meſſenger, had been in ſearch of her huſband, and on her return, ſtumbles on his body; the chorus, we muſt ſuppoſe, are at the forepart of the ſtage, and Tecmeſſa at the back, in the place where Ajax had fallen upon his ſword. The chorus here, agreeably to what I have before obſerved, was cuſtomary, in the impaſſioned parts of the drama, to ſing in ſtrophe and antiſtrophe: I have, therefore, put it into rhime, the better to diſtinguiſh it.

TEC. O! I have reaſon now to weep, indeed.
CHO. What hand performed the horrid deed?
TEC. His own,
Doubtleſs it was; the ſword he fell upon,
Here, fixed in earth, declares it muſt be ſo.
CHO. [Approaching towards the body.]
Alone without one pitying friend,
Cam'ſt thou to this dreadful end;
Was I not myſelf to blame,
Who neglectful never came?
Bring him, Tecmeſſa, to my eyes,
Tell me, where thy Ajax lies.
TEC. He is not to be ſeen: this folded garment
Shall hide the horrid ſight: a ſight no friend
Would wiſh to ſee: whilſt from his noſtrils ſtream
The black blood, more ſtill iſſuing from the wound,
Made by his own deſtructive hand: O me!
What muſt I do? what friend will raiſe him up?
O! where is Teucer? he ſhould have been here
To pay his laſt ſad duty to a brother:
O! wretched Ajax! but to think, alas!
What once thou haſt been, and what now thou art,
Thy very foes muſt ſure lament thy fate.
CHO. Ajax, long ſince in thy durate mind,
Thy ſad purpoſe was deſigned;
Long ſince wert thou reſolved to ſeek repoſe,
From thy never-ceaſing woes;
This from the daily ſigh, the nightly tear,
This from thy ſorrows did I fear;
This from thy hate which nought could e'er aſſuage;
And 'gainſt th' Atridæ all thy rage:

For never did thy ſoul contentment know,
But ſtill with fierceſt indignation glow,
Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe.
TEC. O! me!
CHO. Alas! I know the wound muſt pierce
Thy inmoſt ſoul.
TEC. Unhappy, loſt Tecmeſſa!
CHO. O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy,
Bereaved of ſuch a friend.
TEC. Thou but believ'ſt it,
I am too certain; for I feel it here.
CHO. I know thou doſt
TEC. What ſervitude, my child,
Muſt we endure? Who will protect us now?
CHO. Doubtleſs thy fear of future pain,
From the Atridæ all are vain,
For never can they mean ſuch ills to thee;
Unfeeling they of human woe,
Nor love nor piety could know;
May heaven avert the ſad calamity!
TEC. The gods ordained it, and it muſt be ſo.
CHO. But he hath ſuffered more than he deſerved.
TEC. Jove's dreadful daughter, Pallas, ſo decreed
His fate, to gratify her loved Ulyſſes.
CHO. Ulyſſes, ever pleaſed to ſee
His madneſs, now will ſmile at thee,
Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine:
By him the curſed Atridæ led,
Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead,
And in the cruel mirth with pleaſure join.
TEC. Let them rejoice, let them inſult him now
With ſavage joy, but when the dreadful day
Of battle comes, whom living they deſpiſed,

When

When dead they ſhall lament: fools never know
The treaſure's value, till the treaſure's loſt:
But far more bitter was his death to me,
Than ſweet to them: to Ajax 'twas moſt welcome;
Death was his only wiſh, and he obtained it:
Then wherefore ſhould they triumph? by the hand
Of heaven, and not by theirs my Ajax fell.
Then let Ulyſſes ſmile: he is not theirs,
He lives not for the Grecians; he is gone
And has bequeathed his ſorrows all to me.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TEU. Alas! alas!
CHO. Hark! 'tis the voice of Teucer,
In mournful ſighs lamenting our ſad fate.
TEU. O! Ajax, is it ſo? my deareſt brother,
Dear as theſe eyes to me, hath fame ſaid true,
And art thou gone?
CHO. O! Teucer, he is dead.
TEU. Unhappy fate!
CHO. 'Tis ſo indeed.
TEU. Alas!
Wretch that I am.
CHO. O! thou haſt cauſe to weep.
TEU. Dreadful calamity!
CHO. It is indeed
Too much to bear.
TEU. O! wretched, wretched Teucer!
Where is the child? is he at Troy?
CHO. Alone
And in the tent.
TEU. Will ye not bring him to me,
Leſt he ſhould fall a victim to the foe?

E'en

E'en as the hunters ſeize the lion's whelp
Left to its helpleſs dam: quick! fly! aſſiſt me,
For all the glad triumph o'er the dead.

CHO. To thee, O! Teucer, he bequeathed the care
Of his loved child, and thou obey'ſt him well.

TEU. O Ajax! never did theſe eyes behold
A ſight ſo dreadful; came I then for this
With luckleſs ſpeed? O! melancholy journey!
To ſeek thee long in vain, and thus at laſt
To find thee dead before me; O! my brother!
Quick through the Græcian hoſt, as if ſome god
Had brought the tidings, ſpread the dire report
Of thy untimely fate; far from thee then
I heard and wept, but now, alas! I ſee
And am undone; my beſt, my deareſt Ajax!
Unveil the body; let me view it well,
And count my miſeries; horrid ſpectacle;
O! raſh advent'rous deed! what weight of woe
Thy death has laid on me! alas! to whom
Or whither ſhall I go? O! wherefore, Teucer,
Wert thou not here to ſtop a brother's hand?
What will our poor unhappy father ſay,
The wretched Telamon, will he receive me
With looks of love and pleaſure, when I come
Without his Ajax? O! he never will.
E'en in the beſt of times he was not wont
To ſmile, or joy in aught. What then will now
His anger vent? will he not ſpeak of me
As of a faithleſs, baſe, unworthy ſon,
The ſpurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betrayed and ſlain his beſt-loved Ajax,
To gain his fair poſſeſſions after death?
Thus will his wrath, ſharpened by peeviſh age,

Upbraid

Upbraid me, guiltleſs; and to ſlavery doomed
A wretched exile from his native land
Shall Teucer wander forth; ſuch dreadful ills
Muſt I expect at home: at Troy, my foes
Are numerous, and my friends, alas! how few!
Thou art the cauſe of all: for O! my Ajax,
What ſhall I do? how can I ſave thee now
From this ſad fate? O! who could have foreſeen
That Hector, long ſince dead, at laſt ſhould prove
The murtherer of Ajax? By the gods
I do beſeech you, mark the fate of both;
The belt, which Ajax did to Hector give
Dragged the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field,
Till he expired; and now, behold! the ſword,
Which Hector gave to Ajax, is the cauſe
Of Ajax' death: Erynnis' ſelf did forge
The fatal ſteel, and Pluto made the belt;
Dreadful artificer! But this, and all
That happens to us, is the work of heaven;
If there be thoſe who doubt it, let them hold
Their differing judgments, I ſhall keep my own.

CHO. Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare
To bury Ajax, and defend thyſelf
Againſt thy foe, whom yonder I behold
This way advancing, with malignant ſmile,
And looks of ill intent.

TEU. Who can it be?
From th' army, thinkeſt thou?

CHO. 'Tis the man whoſe cauſe
We came to fight, e'en Menelaus.

TEU. 'Tis ſo.
As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

MEN. Stop there; to thee I ſpeak; let go the body,
I will not have it touched.

TEU. Why touch it not?

MEN. Becauſe it is my will, and his who leads
The Græcian hoſt.

TEU. But wherefore is it ſo?

MEN. Greece fondly hoped that ſhe had brought a friend,
And firm ally, but by experience found
That Troy herſelf was not ſo much our foe
As Ajax was, who nightly wandered forth
With deadlieſt rage to murther all our hoſt,
And, but ſome god did fruſtrate his intent,
The fate himſelf hath met, had been our own;
Then had he triumphed; but the gods ordained
It ſhould not be; and 'gainſt the flocks and herds
Turned all his fury: wherefore, know, there lives not
A man of courage or of power ſufficient
To bury Ajax: on the yellow ſhore
He ſhall be caſt, to be the food of birds
That wander there: Thou mayſt reſent it too,
But 'twill be vain; at leaſt we will command
When dead, whom living we could ne'er ſubdue,
Nor aſk thy leave: he never would ſubmit,
But now he muſt: yield, therefore, or we force thee.
'Tis the Plebeian's duty to obey
The voice of thoſe who bear authority,
And he who doth not is the worſt of men;
For never can the ſtate itſelf ſupport
By wholeſome laws, where there is no ſubmiſſion:
An army's beſt defence is modeſt fear
And rev'rence of its leaders, without theſe
It cannot conquer: it becomes a man

How

How great ſoe'er his ſtrength, ſtill to remember,
A little, very little, may deſtroy him.
He who is guarded by humility
And conſcious ſhame, alone in ſafety lies;
But where licentious freedom and reproach
Injurious reign, each as his will directs
Still acting, know, that city ſoon muſt fall
From all its bliſs, and ſink in deepeſt woe.
Remember then, reſpect is due to me.
Let us not think when pleaſure is enjoyed
We muſt not ſuffer too and taſte of pain;
For theſe to mortals ſtill alternate riſe.
There lived not one ſo proud and arrogant
As Ajax was: I will be haughty now;
It is my turn: take heed then, touch him not,
Leſt, while thou ſtriv'ſt to bury him, thyſelf
Shouldſt drop into the tomb.

CHO. O! Menelaus,
Do not with maxims grave, and wiſdom's rules,
Mix foul reproach and ſlander on the dead.

TEU. It ſhould not move our wonder, O! my friend,
To ſee the vulgar err, of meaner ſouls,
And birth obſcure, when men ſo nobly born
Will talk thus baſely: tell me, Menelaus,
For 'twas thy firſt aſſertion, didſt thou bring
Our Ajax here to help the Græcian hoſt,
Or came he hither by himſelf alone
Conducted; whence is thy command o'er him,
Or theſe his followers? who gave thee power,
Who gave thee right; thou mayſt be Sparta's king,
But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law
No more to thee, than thou wert bound to Ajax;
Thyſelf no general, but to others here

Subjected,

Subjected, therefore lord it where thou mayſt;
Command thy ſlaves, go threaten and chaſtiſe them;
But I will bury Ajax, ſpight of thee,
And of thy brother, for I heed thee not:
He ſailed not here to quarrel for the wife
Of Menelaus, like a hireling ſlave,
But to fulfil the ſtrictly-binding oath
Which he had ſworn; he did not come for thee;
For he deſpiſed ſo poor a cauſe; he came
With all his heralds, and a numerous train,
And brought his captains too; remember therefore
Thy clamours ne'er ſhall turn me from my purpoſe
Whilſt thou art what thou art.

MEN. A tongue like thine
But ill becomes thy ſtate: 'tis moſt unſeemly.

TEU. A keen reproach with juſtice on its ſide
Is always grating.

MEN. This proud archer here
Talks loudly.

TEU.

Strictly-binding oath, &c. Tyndarus, the father of the fair Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them ſoeverthe happy lot ſhould fall to marry her, the reſt ſhould unite in his defence, and, in caſe of any attempt to carry her off, ſhould join their forces to recover her. The event juſtified the neceſſity of this oath. Teucer, therefore, tells Menelaus, that it was not any perſonal regard to him which induced Ajax to join the army, but his reſolution to fulfil this ſolemn engagement.

This proud archer, &c. The foot-ſoldiers, among the Grecians, were divided into the ψιλοι, and the ὁπλιται. The ὁπλιται, or armed ſoldiers, bore heavy armour, engaging with broad ſhields, and long ſpears: Whereas the ψιλοι, or light-armed men, fought with arrows, and darts, or ſometimes ſtones and ſlings, annoying their enemies at a diſtance, like our modern Indians, but unfit for

TEU. 'Tis no mean, illiberal art.
MEN. If thou couldſt bear a ſhield, how inſolent
And haughty wouldſt thou be! when naked thus,
Thou boaſt'ſt thy valour.
TEU. Naked as I am
I ſhould not fly from thee with all thy arms.
MEN. Thy tongue but ſpeaks thy pride.
TEU. I ſhould be proud
When I am juſt.
MEN. Doth juſtice bid me love
Him who deſtroyed me!
TEU. And art thou then deſtroyed?
That's ſtrange indeed, living and dead at once.
MEN. For him I had been ſo: the gods preſerved me.
TEU. Do not diſhonour then the powers divine
That ſaved thee.
MEN. Do I violate their laws?
TEU. If thou forbid'ſt the burial of the dead,
Thou do'ſt offend the gods.
MEN. He was my foe,
And therefore I forbid it.
TEU. Art thou ſure
That Ajax ever was thy foe?
MEN. I am:
Our hate was mutual, and thou know'ſt the cauſe.

TEU.

cloſe fight: theſe, to which Teucer belonged, were inferior in honour and dignity to the heavy-armed ſoldiers; Menelaus, therefore, reproaches him as a man of no rank, alluding probably to the cuſtom among the Ἀγχιμολοι of ſhooting their arrows, and then retiring behind the ſhields of the heavy-armed for protection. Homer, whom Sophocles never loſes ſight of, deſcribes Teucer acting in this manner. See the 8th book of the Iliad.

TEU. Becauſe thou wert corrupted, thy falſe voice
Condemned him.
MEN. 'Twas the judges' fault, not mine.
TEU. Thus mayſt thou ſcreen a thouſand injuries.
MEN. Some one may ſuffer for this inſolence.
TEU. Not more perhaps than others.
MEN. This alone
Remember, buried he ſhall never be.
TEU. Do thou remember too, I ſay he ſhall.
MEN. So have I ſeen a bold imperious man,
With forward tongue, before the ſtorm began,
Urging the tardy mariner to ſail,
But when the tempeſt roſe, no more was heard
The coward's voice, but wrapt beneath his cloak
Silent he laid, and ſuffered every foot
To trample on him; thus it is with thee,
And thy foul tongue; forth from a little cloud,
Soon as the ſtorm ſhall burſt, it will o'erwhelm thee,
And ſtop thy clamours.
TEU. I too have beheld
A man with folly ſwoln, reproach his friends
Oppreſſed with ſore calamity, when ſtraight
One came like me, with indignation fired,
Saw, and addreſſed him thus: "Ceaſe, ſhameleſs wretch,
"Nor thus oppreſs the dead; for, if thou doſt,
"Remember thou ſhalt ſuffer for thy crime."
Thus ſpake he to the weak inſulting fool;
Methinks

Thy falſe voice, &c. The Scholiaſts on this place inform us, that in the famous conteſt between Ajax and Ulyſſes for the arms of Achilles, the former loſt them by the caſting vote of Menelaus.

Weak inſulting fool, &c. There is ſomething in the raillery of this ſcene which will probably appear very rough, when compared with the refinement of modern manners: The heroes of Sophocles,

Methinks I ſee him here; it muſt be he,
E'en Menelaus; have I gueſſed aright?

MEN. 'Tis well; I'll leave thee: 'tis a folly thus
To talk with thoſe whom we have power to puniſh.

[*Exit.*

TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEU. Away, this babbler is not to be borne.

CHO. The conteſt will grow warm: O! Teucer, haſte,
Prepare ſome hollow foſs for the remains
Of Ajax: raiſe him there a monument,
By after ages ne'er to be forgotten.

TEU. And, lo! in happy hour this way advancing
The wife and ſon of our unhappy friend,
To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEU. Come hither, boy, bend down and touch thy father;
There ſit, and holding in thy hands this hair,
And her's, and thine, the ſuppliant's humble treaſure,
Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father:
If from yon hoſtile camp the foe ſhould come

like thoſe of Homer, are not remarkable for their delicacy. "Il "faut convenir (ſays Brumoy) que les heros Grecs ſe traitent un "peu à la Grecque, c'eſt à-dire, aſſez incivilement; mais telle "étoit la maniere d'une nation d'ailleurs ſi polie; cela n'eſt pas "pour nous plaire aujourd'hui."

Holding in thy hands, &c. It was cuſtomary among the Grecians, on the death of friends or relations, to tear and cut off their hair to throw on the dead body, or ſometimes into the funeral pile, with a deſign to render the ghoſt of the deceaſed perſon propitious, as well as to ſhew their grief for the loſs of him: we find Electra performing this ceremony in honour of Oreſtes, whom ſhe ſuppoſed dead.

To drive thee hence, far from his native land,
Whoe'er he be, unburied may he lie,
From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
E'en as this hair which here I cut before thee:
O! guard it well, my child; and you, my friends,
Behave like men, aſſiſt, protect him now,
Till I return, and, ſpite of all our foes,
Perform the rites, and raiſe a tomb to Ajax.

[*Exit.*

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the happy hour appear,
That comes to calm our every fear,
From endleſs toil to bring us ſweet repoſe,
To bid our weary wanderings ceaſe,
To fold us in the arms of peace,
And put the wiſhed-for period to our woes?
For ſince the day when firſt to Troy we came,
Nought have we known but grief, reproach, and ſhame.

ANTISTROPHE I.

O! that the man, who erſt inſpired
With horrid rage, our Græcians fired
To ſlaughterous deeds, and taught them firſt to fight,

E'er

Exit. Menelaus goes out with an intention, we muſt ſuppoſe, to bring back with him a proper force, to ſecure the execution of his orders, which Teucer had treated with contempt; Teucer retires to find out a proper place for the interment of Ajax, and leaves Tecmeſſa and Euryſaces weeping over the body: the chorus ſing a pathetic dirge, lamenting the miſeries of war, and their own unhappy condition.

E'er he had learned the dreadful trade,
Himſelf had mingled with the dead,
Or ſcattered wide in air, or ſunk in endleſs night!
For O! from war unnumbered evils flow,
The inexhauſted ſource of every human woe.

STROPHE II.

By war diſturbed, the genial board
No longer will its ſweets afford;
Their fragrant odours, round my head,
The verdant wreaths no longer ſpread;
Nor muſic's charms my ſoul delight,
Nor love with rapture crowns the night;
No love, alas! for me, but grief and care;
For when I think of Troy, I ſtill deſpair,
And wet with many a tear my wild diſhevelled hair.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Nor nightly fear, nor hoſtile dart,
Whilſt Ajax lived, appalled my heart;
But all our pleaſures now are o'er,
The valiant Ajax is no more:
O! could I climb the woody ſteep
That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat!
Thence ſhould my eye the lovely proſpect greet,
And ſmile on ſacred Athens riſing at my feet.

ACT V.

TEUCER, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

THIS way I bent my haſty ſteps, to meet
The Græcian chief, who hither comes prepared
To vent his keen reproaches.

AGA. I am told
That thou, e'en thou, the ſon of a vile ſlave,
Haſt dared to utter fouleſt calumny
Againſt thy prince, and paſſed unpuniſhed for it;
Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride
And high demeanor, had thy mother ſprung
From noble blood? barbarian as thou art,
How couldſt thou praiſe a wretch who like thyſelf
Was nothing? we, it ſeems, for thou haſt ſworn it,
Are not the maſters or of Greece or thee;
Ajax, alone, thou ſay'ſt, was leader here.
Shall we be thus inſulted by our ſlaves?
Who is this boaſter? and what mighty deed
Hath he performed which I could not have done?
Is there no hero in the Græcian hoſt
But Ajax? Vain indeed were our reſolves
In the warm conteſt for Achilles' arms,
If Teucer yet ſhall queſtion the decree,
Againſt the general voice; reſiſting ſtill,
And ſtill reproachful, with deluſive arts
Though conquered, yet oppoſing: wholeſome laws
Will nought avail, if thoſe whom juſtice deems
Superior, to the vanquiſhed muſt reſign,
And firſt in virtue be the laſt in fame;
It muſt not be: not always the huge ſize
Of weighty limbs, enſures the victory;
They who excel in wiſdom are alone
Invincible: thou ſeeſt the brawny ox,
How the ſmall whip will drive him through the field;
What if the med'cine be applied to thee,
For thy proud boaſting, and licentious tongue!
'Twill be thy portion ſoon, unleſs thou learn'ſt
More wiſdom; henceforth, mindful what thou art,

Bring

Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead
Thy cauſe; for know the language which thou talk'ſt
Is barbarous, and I underſtand thee not.
CHO. I can but wiſh that wiſdom may attend
To guide you both.
TEU. Alas! how very ſoon
Are all the merits of the dead forgotten!
O! Ajax, is the memory of thee
Already loſt, e'en by the man for whom
Thy life ſo oft was ventured in the field?
But now 'tis paſt, and buried in oblivion:
Thou wordy ſlanderer! canſt thou not remember,
When baffled and unequal to the foe,
Cloſe pent within the walls our forces lay,
Canſt thou not call to mind who came alone
To your deliverance, when devouring flames
Towered o'er our ſhips, when Hector leaped the foſs
And ruſhed amongſt us? then, who fought for Greece,
Who drove him back, but Ajax? who, thou ſay'ſt,
Could never fight! did he not fight for you?
He met the noble Hector hand to hand,
Unbidden dared the fortune of the field;
He ſcorned the coward's art to fix his lot
In the moiſt earth; forth from the creſted helmet
It ſprang the firſt: ſuch were the deeds of Ajax,
And I was witneſs of them; I, the ſlave,
For ſo thou call'ſt me, ſprung from a barbarian:
How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth!
Who was thy grandſire? canſt thou not remember
That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops? tell me
Who was thy father, Atreus, was he not?
That worſt of men, who at a brother's table
Served up his children, horrible repaſt!

Thy mother too a Cretan, and a ſlave;
A vile adultreſs, whom thy father caught
And head-long caſt into the ſea: ſhalt thou
Talk then to me of birth! to me, the ſon
Of valiant Telamon, renowned in war,
And wedded to a queen, the royal race
Of great Laomedon, and faireſt gift
Of famed Alcides! thus of noble blood
From either parent ſprung, ſhall I diſgrace
The man whom thou, inhuman, wouldſt ſtill keep
Unburied here? doſt thou not bluſh to think on't?
But, mark me well; if thou doſt caſt him forth,
Not he alone inglorious on the plain
Shall lie, together we will periſh all:
To die with glory in a brother's cauſe,
Is better far than fighting for the wife
Of Agamemnon, or of Menelaus:
For thy own ſake, and not for mine, remember,
If thou provoke me, thou'lt be ſorry for it,
And wiſh thou'dſt rather feared than angered Teucer.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

CHO. Ulyſſes, if thou mean'ſt not to inflame,
But to compoſe, this dreadful ſtrife, thou com'ſt
In happieſt hour.

ULY. Far off I heard the voice
Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corſe;
Whence roſe the clamour, friends?

MEN. With bittereſt words
This Teucer here, Ulyſſes, has reviled me.

ULY. What words? for if he heard the ſame from thee,
I blame him not.

AGA.

AGA. He did provoke me to it.
ULY. What injury hath he done thee?
AGA. He declares
The body ſhall have ſepulture, himſelf
Perforce will bury Ajax, ſpite of me,
And of my power.
ULY. Shall I be free, and ſpeak
The truth to thee, without reproach or blame?
AGA. Thou mayſt; for well thou know'ſt I hold Ulyſſes
Of all the Greeks my beſt and deareſt friend.
ULY. Then hear me; by the gods I muſt entreat thee,
Do not, remorſeleſs and inhuman, caſt
The body forth unburied, nor permit
Authority to trample thus on juſtice.
E'er ſince our conteſt for Achilles' arms,
Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I ſcorn
To uſe him baſely; e'en Ulyſſes owns,
Of all the Græcian chiefs who came to Troy,
(Except Achilles) Ajax was the braveſt.
Do not deny him then the honours due
To worth ſo great; for know, it were a crime
Not againſt him alone, but 'gainſt the gods,
A violation of the laws divine.
To hurt the brave and virtuous after death,
E'en though he lived thy foe, is infamous.
AGA. Plead'ſt thou for Ajax?
ULY. Yes; I was his foe
Whilſt juſtice would permit me; but he's dead;
Therefore thou ſhouldſt not triumph, nor rejoice
With mirth unſeemly, o'er a vanquiſhed man.
AGA. 'Tis not ſo eaſy for a king to act
By honour's ſtricteſt rules.
ULY. 'Tis always ſo,

Thy mother too a Cretan, and a ſlave;
A vile adultreſs, whom thy father caught
And head-long caſt into the ſea: ſhalt thou
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AGA. Plead'ſt thou for Ajax?
ULY. Yes; I was his foe
Whilſt juſtice would permit me; but he's dead;
Therefore thou ſhouldſt not triumph, nor rejoice
With mirth unſeemly, o'er a vanquiſhed man.
AGA. 'Tis not ſo eaſy for a king to act
By honour's ſtricteſt rules.
ULY. 'Tis always ſo,

To hearken to the counſels of a friend,
When he adviſes well.
AGA. But know, the good
And virtuous ſtill ſubmit to thoſe who rule.
ULY. No more: when thou art vanquiſhed by thy friends,
Thou art thyſelf the conqueror.
AGA. Still remember
For whom thou plead'ſt, Ulyſſes.
ULY. For a foe,
But for a brave one.
AGA. Doſt thou thus revere,
E'en after death, thy enemy?
ULY. I do:
Virtue is dearer to me than revenge.
AGA. Such men are moſt unſtable in their ways.
ULY. Our deareſt friend may one day be our foe.
AGA. Doſt thou deſire ſuch friends?
ULY. I cannot love
Or praiſe th' unfeeling heart.
AGA. This day ſhall Greece
Mark us for cowards.
ULY. Greece will call us juſt! [burial?
AGA. Wouldſt thou perſuade me, then, to grant him
ULY. I would, and for that purpoſe came I hither.
AGA. How every man conſults his own advantage,
And acts but for himſelf!
ULY. And who is he
Whom I ſhould wiſh to ſerve before Ulyſſes?
AGA. 'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine.
ULY. The deed will win thee praiſe, and every tongue
Shall call thee good.
AGA. Thou know'ſt I'd not refuſe
Ulyſſes more, much more than this; but Ajax

Or buried or unburied is the ſame,
And muſt be hateful ſtill to Agamemnon;
But do as it beſeems thee beſt.
CHO. Ulyſſes,
The man who ſays thou art not wiſe and good,
Is ſenſeleſs and unjuſt.
ULY. I tell thee, Teucer,
Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax,
As once I was his foe: e'en now I mean
To join with thee, a fellow-labourer,
In all the pious offices of love,
Nor would omit, what every man ſhould pay,
The honours due to ſuch exalted virtue!
TEU. O! beſt of men, thou haſt my thanks and praiſe,
And well deſerv'ſt them, for thou haſt tranſcended
My utmoſt hopes; I little thought the worſt
Of all his foes among the Græcian hoſt,
Would thus alone defend, alone protect,
The dead from inſult, when theſe thundering leaders
United came, to caſt his body forth
With infamy; but may the god who rules
O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful furies,
Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding ſiſters,
With all-deciding juſtice, ſoon repay
The haughty tyrants: for thy offered aid,
Son of Laertes, in the funeral rites,
Perhaps it might offend the honoured ſhade
Of our dead friend, it cannot be accepted;
For all beſide we thank thee: if thou wilt'ſt
To ſend aſſiſtance from the Græcian camp,
'Twill be received; the reſt ſhall be my care.
Thou haſt performed the duty of a friend,
And we acknowledge it.

ULY.

ULY. I would have lent
My willing aid; but ſince it muſt not be,
I ſhall ſubmit: farewell. [*Exit Ulyſſes.*

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

TEU. Thus far is right;
The time already paſt doth chide our ſloth:
My friends, be vigilant; let ſome prepare
The hollow foſs, ſome o'er the ſacred flame
Place the rich tripod for the funeral bath;
Forth from the camp a choſen band muſt bear
His glittering arms, and trophies of the war.
Do thou, my child, if thou haſt ſtrength, uplift [to Euryſaces.
Thy father's body; ſee, the veins, yet warm,
Spout forth with blood; haſte, help, aſſiſt me, all
Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me
Your laſt ſad duties to the noble Ajax!
For never was on earth a better man.

CHO. Whate'er of good or ill, weak mortals know,
Muſt from their beſt of guides, experience, flow;
Seek then no farther; for to man is given
The preſent ſtate, the future left to heaven.

Whate'er of good or ill, &c. The ſentiment in the original is, if I miſtake not, exactly agreeably to my interpretation, though the Greek carries with it ſome degree of obſcurity; it ſeems deſigned by Sophocles as a kind of moral to the drama; I have, therefore, taken the liberty more fully to expreſs and explain it in the tranſlation. For a complete defence and illuſtration of his play, in all its parts, I refer my readers to Hedelin's critique on Ajax, ſubjoined to his pratique du theatre, or, whole art of the ſtage.

FINIS.

ELECTRA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELECTRA, daughter of AGAMEMNON and CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ORESTES, brother of ELECTRA.

PYLADES, friend of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, wife of ÆGISTHUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ſiſter of ELECTRA.

ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycenæ.

CHORUS,

Compoſed of the principal ladies of Mycenæ.

SCENE, MYCENÆ, before the palace of ÆGISTHUS.

ELECTRA.

ACT I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR.

O Son of great Atrides, he who led
Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls,
At length behold what thy deſiring eyes
So long have ſought; behold thy native ſoil,
Thy much loved Argos, and the hallowed grove
Of Io, frantic maid: on this ſide lies
The Lycian forum, on the left the fane

Of

The ſcene lies juſt before the gates of the palace of Ægiſthus; on the back part of it is repreſented a view of the two cities of Argos and Mycenæ, the temple of Juno, and the grove of Io, which muſt altogether, have made a noble and magnificent appearance, as the Greeks ſpared no expence in the decorations of their theatre. The place of action, the perſons, with the whole view and ſubject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the firſt ſcene, with that accuracy, plainneſs and ſimplicity, for which Sophocles is ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed.

The hallowed grove of Io. Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transformed into an heifer by Jupiter, to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who diſcovered and placed her under the guardianſhip of Argus. She afterwards ſent a gad fly to ſting her into madneſs. The ſtory is told in the firſt book of Ovid's Metamorphoſes.

The Lycian forum. A place ſacred to Apollo λυκιος or λυκοκτονος the wolf-ſlayer, ſo called from his killing wolves when under the diſguiſe of a ſhepherd to Admetus.

Of Juno far renowned: behold! we come
To rich Mycenæ, and the ſlaughterous houſe
Of Pelops' hapleſs race, from whoſe ſad walls
Long ſince I bore thee, at thy ſiſter's hand
Gladly received, and with paternal care
To this bleſt day have foſtered up thy youth,
Till riper years ſhould give thee to return,
And pay with dire revenge thy father's murther.
Now, my Oreſtes, and thou dear companion
Of all our ſufferings, much-loved Pylades,
Let deepeſt counſel ſway our juſt reſolves;
For lo! reſplendent Phœbus with his light
Calls up the chearful birds to early ſong,
And gloomy night hath loſt her ſtarry train:
Come then, my friends, and e'er th' awakened city
Pours forth her buſy throngs, this inſtant here
Let us conſult; believe me, 'tis no time
For dull delay; 'tis the deciſive hour,
And this the very criſis of our fate.

ORE. What proofs thou giv'ſt me of the nobleſt nature
And true benevolence, thou good old man!
Of ſervants ſure the faithfuleſt and beſt
That ever bore the name: the generous ſteed,
Though worn with years, thus keeps his wonted courage,

And

The fane of Juno. Between Argos and Mycenæ, which are often miſtaken by the tragic poets for the ſame city, was placed the magnificent temple of Juno. Before the time of Agamemnon they had each a diſtinct ſovereign: he firſt united and ruled over them both.

The ſlaughterous houſe of Pelops. A family which furniſhed ample matter for the tragic poets. The ſtories, here alluded to, of Tantalus, Pelops, Thyeſtes, Agamemnon, &c. are too well known to need any illuſtration.

And warns his maſter of approaching danger;
Like him thou ſtirr'ſt me up to noble deeds,
And follow'ſt me undaunted: but attend
To what I have reſolved, and, if I err,
Let thy ſuperior judgment ſet me right.
When to the Delphic oracle I flew,
Eager to know how on my father's foes
I beſt might ſatiate my revenge, the god
Enjoined me not by force, or open arms,
To ruſh upon them, but with guileful arts,
And ſilent, well-conducted fraud, betray them.
Such was his will; thou, therefore, ſoon as time
Shall lend thee opportunity, unknown
And unſuſpected (as thy abſence hence
For ſo long ſpace, and hoary age, ſhall make thee)
Muſt ſteal upon them, learn their ſecret counſels,
As ſoon thou mayſt, and quick inform us of them;
Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus ſent
By one who is their friend and firm ally;
Say, and confirm it with a ſolemn oath,
Oreſtes is no more, by a rude ſhock
Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games;

Be

From Phanoteus ſent, &c. Phanoteus was a ſmall midland town of Phocis, a city of Greece, famous for the oracle of Delphos: according to Strabo, it was formerly called Panope.

At the Pythian games, &c. The games here mentioned, and which are deſcribed in the ſecond act, were not inſtituted till five hundred years after the death of Oreſtes; Sophocles, therefore, is found guilty by the critics, of a flagrant anachroniſm in this place. Mr. Brumoy however endeavours to defend him, by obſerving, that though the lateſt æra of their firſt celebration is dated at the 48th Olympiad, Apollo might, nevertheleſs, immediately after the deſtruction of the Pytho, have himſelf inſtituted ſomething like the

Be this thy tale; mean time (for thus the god
His will divine expreſſed) my father's tomb
With due libations and devoted hair
Ourſelves will crown; and thence returning bring,
From the dark covert where thou know'ſt 'twas hid,
The brazen urn; there, we ſhall tell the tyrant,
Thrice welcome news! Oreſtes' aſhes lie.
What ſhould deter me from the pious fraud?
Since my feigned death but gains me real fame,
And I ſhall wake to better life: the deed,
Which brings ſucceſs and honour, muſt be good,
Oft-times the wiſeſt and the beſt of men
From death like this, have roſe with added greatneſs;
E'en ſo thy friend to his deluded foes
Shall ſoon return unlooked-for, and before them
Shine like a ſtar with more diſtinguiſhed luſtre.
O! my loved country, and its guardian gods,
Receive Oreſtes, and with happy omen
Propitious ſmile, and thou, paternal ſeat,
For lo! by heaven's command, I come to purge thee
Of vile uſurpers, and avenge thy wrong:
Drive me not from thee an abandoned exile
With infamy, but grant me to poſſeſs

My

grand ſolemnity, which was, many years afterwards, heightened and improved by the public exhibition of theſe games, under the influence of the civil power.

The pious fraud, &c. The Greeks, who were remarkably ſuperſtitious, entertained a notion, that to feign themſelves dead, had ſomething in it both wicked and dangerous; they were apprehenſive that death would not be thus mocked, but would revenge the fraud, by coming upon them in reality. Oreſtes endeavours to ſhake off theſe fears, and to vindicate himſelf by the example of others who had done the ſame, and paſſed unpuniſhed.

My father's throne, and fix his injured race.
Thus far 'tis well: my faithful miniſter,
Thou to thy office, we to ours with ſpeed;
So time and opportunity require,
On whom the fate of mortals muſt depend.

ELE. [from within.] O miſery!

GOV. Methought a mournful voice
Spake from within.

ORE. Perhaps the poor Electra,
Shall we not ſtay and hearken to it?

GOV. No:
Firſt be Apollo's great beheſts obeyed
Before thy father's tomb; that pious deed
Performed ſhall fire our ſouls with nobler warmth,
And crown our bold attempt with fair ſucceſs.

[*Exeunt.*

ELECTRA.

O! ſacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
Her ſighs, and groans, and witneſſed to her woes,
Which ever as each hateful morn appeared
I poured before you; what at eve retired
I felt of anguiſh my ſad couch alone

Firſt be Apollo's, &c. The meeting of Electra and Oreſtes in this place, would apparently have ſpoiled the whole œconomy of the drama; it is therefore artfully deferred by the poet, at the ſame time that the reaſon alleged by the old man, gives us the moſt favourable idea of the piety of the antients. A brother has an opportunity of ſeeing and converſing with a ſiſter whom he loved, and from whom he had been ſeparated twenty years, but he foregoes it, in order previouſly to perform a religious duty. Chriſtians may read and profit by the example.

Can tell, which watered nightly with my tears
Received me ſorrowing; that beſt can tell
What pangs I ſuffered for a hapleſs father,
Whom not the god of war with ruthleſs hand
Struck nobly fighting in a diſtant ſoil,
But my fell mother, and the curſed Ægiſthus,
The partner of her bed, remorſeleſs ſlew;
Untimely didſt thou fall, lamented ſhade,
And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate;
Nor ſhall ſhe ceaſe to mourn thee, while theſe eyes
View the fair heavens, or behold the ſun;
Never, O! never! like the nightingale
Whoſe plaintive ſong bewails her raviſhed brood;
Here will I ſtill lament my father's wrongs,
And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
O! ye infernal deities, and thou,
Terreſtrial Hermes, and thou, Nemeſis,
Replete with curſes, and ye vengeful furies,
Offspring of gods, the miniſters of wrath
To vile adulterers, who with pity view
The ſlaughtered innocent, behold this deed!
O! come, aſſiſt, revenge my father's murther;
Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Oreſtes;
For lo I ſink beneath oppreſſive woe,
And can no longer bear the weight alone.

CHORUS,

Like the nightingale, &c. Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, and ſiſter of Procne the wife of Tereus The poet, both in this and the following ſcene, takes the nightingale for Procne, as it was Procne, and not Philomela, who ſerved up her ſon Itys to Tereus, in revenge for the injury done to her ſiſter. Æſchylus, Euripides, and Ariſtophanes alſo, ſuppoſe Procne to have been changed into a nightingale.

CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHO. O! wretched daughter of an impious mother!
Wilt thou for ever mourn, for ever thus
With unavailing tears, and endleſs ſorrow,
Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate,
By a vile woman's wicked arts betrayed?
Periſh the hand (forgive the pious curſe,
Ye heavenly powers) that gave the deadly blow!

ELE. My noble friends, and partners in affliction,
Who thus, to ſooth my ſorrows, kindly try
Each art which love and friendſhip can inſpire;
Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do,
I know my tears are fruitleſs all and vain;
But O! permit me to indulge my griefs,
For I muſt weep.

CHO. Thy tears can ne'er recall him
From the dark manſions of the common grave,
No, nor thy prayers; they can but make thee, wretched,
And ſink thee deeper in calamity;
Why art thou then ſo fond of miſery?

ELE. Devoid of ſenſe and feeling is the heart
That can forget an injured parent's wrongs.
I love the airy meſſenger of Jove,
The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate,
And every night repeats the tender tale;
Thee too I reverence as a goddeſs, thee,
Unhappy Niobe! for ſtill thou weep'ſt,
And from the marble, tears eternal flow.

Meſſenger of Jove. Procne, called the meſſenger of Jove, from her uſhering in the ſpring. See the note on Philomela.

Unhappy Niobe. Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes; feigned by the poets to be turned into ſtone, after the death of her children. See Ovid's Met. Book VI.

CHO. But O! reflect that not to thee alone
Misfortune comes, that comes to all: behold
Iphianaſſa, and Chryſothemis,
And him who hides his grief, illuſtrious youth,
The loved Oreſtes, theſe have ſuffered too.

ELE. Oreſtes! yes, Mycenæ ſhall receive
In happy hour her great avenger; Jove
With ſmiles auſpicious ſhall conduct him to me;
For him alone I wait, for him, a wretch
Deſpiſed, of children and of nuptial rites
Hopeleſs I wander; he remembers not
What I have done for him, what ſuffered, ſtill
With airy promiſes he mocks my hopes,
And yet he comes not to me.

CHO. But he will.

Deſpair not, daughter; Jove is yet in heaven,
The god who ſees, and knows, and governs, all:
Patient to him ſubmit, nor let thy rage
Too far tranſport thee, nor oblivion drown
The juſt remembrance of thy matchleſs woes;
Time is a kind, indulgent deity,
And he ſhall give thee ſuccour, he ſhall ſend
The god of Acheron, from Chryſa's ſhores
To bring Oreſtes, and avenge thy wrongs.

ELE.

Iphianaſſa and Chryſothemis. Homer Il. (Book IX.) mentions three daughters of Agamemnon, Chryſothemis, Laodice, and Iphianaſſa. Euripides takes no notice of any but Iphigenia, (who was ſacrificed) and Electra. Poſſibly the Laodice of Homer is the Electra of Sophocles. The poets took the liberty of changing circumſtances of this nature, not eſſential to the ſubject, as they thought proper.

From Chryſa's ſhores. Chryſa, or Chryſſa, was a town of Phocis by the river ſide, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was

ELE. O! but the while how much of life is gone!
And I a hopeleſs, wretched orphan ſtill,
Without a friend to guard, or to protect me;
Diſgraced, diſhonoured, like a ſtranger clad
In baſe attire, and fed with homelieſt fare.

CHO. Sad news indeed the hapleſs meſſenger
To Argos brought, that ſpoke the wiſhed return
Of thy loved father to his native ſoil;
Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
Or by a mortal or immortal hand;
The work of fraud and luſt, a horrid deed!
Whoe'er performed it.

ELE. O! deteſted feaſt!
O! day, the bittereſt ſure that ever roſe!
With him I periſhed then; but may the gods

king; this was the place where Oreſtes was privately educated, and accounts for the ſo much celebrated friendſhip of the two princes.

The work of fraud and luſt. Ægiſthus and Clytæmneſtra are ſaid to have watched Agamemnon as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a ſhirt without any opening at the neck; entangled in this they murthered him; thus was the ſcheme laid by fraud and treachery, and executed by luſt.

Whoe'er performed it. The Chorus ſeems fearful of attributing that crime to Clytæmneſtra and Ægiſthus, which they knew them guilty of, and to doubt whether they were at liberty to imprecate the divine vengeance on them for it. Dacier attributes this to the author's own idea of government, as requiring the implicit ſubmiſſion of ſubjects to their king, whether he was their lawful ſovereign or an uſurper. Perhaps a better reaſon for this diffidence may be aſſigned from the natural modeſty of the ſex, and the impiety of curſing thoſe who had at leaſt done no injury to them.

Repay the murtherers; never may they hear
The voice of joy, or taſte of comfort more!

CHO. Ceaſe thy complaints, already haſt thou ſuffered
For thy loud diſcontents, and threatened vengeance.
'Tis folly to contend with power ſuperior.

ELE. Folly indeed, and madneſs! but my griefs
Will force their way, and whilſt Electra breathes
She muſt lament; for who will bring me comfort,
Or ſooth my ſorrows? let me, let me go,
And weep for ever.

CHO. 'Tis my love intreats;
Truſt me, I feel a mother's fondneſs for thee,
And fain would ſave thee from redoubled woes.

ELE. And wouldſt thou have me then neglect the dead?
Forget my father? can there be ſuch guilt?
When I do ſo, may infamy purſue me!
And if I wed, may all the joys of love
Be far removed! if vengeance doth not fall
On crimes like theſe, for ever farewell juſtice,
Shame, honour, truth and piety, farewell!

CHO. Pardon me, daughter; if my warmth offend,
Glad I ſubmit; we'll follow, and obey thee.

ELE. I am myſelf to blame, and bluſh to think
How much unfit I ſeem to bear the weight
Impoſed upon me; but indeed 'tis great:
Forgive me, friends, a woman born as I am,
Muſt ſhe not grieve to ſee each added minute
Fraught with new miſeries? thus to be a ſlave

E'en

I feel a mother's fondneſs, &c. The Chorus is compoſed of the principal ladies of Mycenæ; the air of authority with which they addreſs Electra, their calling her daughter, with other circumſtances, make it moſt probable that, as Dacier has remarked, they were not virgins, but matrons of rank and quality in the city,

E'en in my father's houſe, and from thoſe hands
Which ſhed his blood, to aſk the means of life!
Think what my ſoul muſt ſuffer to behold
The curſed Ægiſthus ſeated on the throne
Of Agamemnon, in the very robes
Which once were his! to ſee the tyrant pour
Libations forth e'en on the fatal ſpot
Where the ſad deed was done! but, worſt of all,
To ſee the murtherer uſurp his bed,
Embrace my mother (by that honoured name
If I may call a guilty wretch like her),
Who, pleaſed, returns his love, and, of her crimes
Unconſcious, ſmiles, nor fears th' avenging furies,
But ever as the bloody day returns
Which gave the royal victim to her wiles,
Annual the dance and choral ſong proclaim
A ſolemn feaſt, nor impious ſacrifice
Forgets ſhe then to her protecting gods.
Shocked at the cruel banquet, I retire,
And in ſome corner hide my griefs, denied
E'en the ſad comfort to indulge my ſorrows;
For Clytæmneſtra in opprobrious terms
Reviles me oft, "To thee alone ſhe cries,
"Is Agamemnon loſt, deteſted maid!
"Think'ſt thou Electra only weeps his fate?
"Perdition on thee! may th' infernal gods

Proclaim a ſolemn feaſt. Nothing could add more to the horror of the crime than ſuch a circumſtance. Clytæmneſtra, not content with murthering her huſband, inſtitutes a ſolemn feaſt in commemoration of the happy event, and calls it, with cruel raillery, the ſupper of Agamemnon. Dinias, in his hiſtory of Argos, informs us, it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which anſwers to the beginning of our January.

" Refuſe thee ſuccour, and protract thy pains!"
Thus rails ſhe bitter, and if chance ſhe hear
Oreſtes is approaching, ſtung with rage,
Wild ſhe exclaims, " Thou art th' accurſed cauſe,
" This is thy deed, who ſtole Oreſtes from me,
" And hid him from my rage; but be aſſured
" E'er long my vengeance ſhall o'ertake thee for it!"
Theſe threats her noble lord ſtill urges on;
That vile adulterer, that abandoned coward,
Whoſe fearful ſoul called in a woman's aid
To execute his bloody purpoſes.
Mean time, Electra ſighs for her Oreſtes,
Her wiſhed avenger; his unkind delay
Deſtroys my hopes; alas! my gentle friends,
Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind?
To ſuffer ills like mine, and not to err
From wild deſtraction, would be ſtrange indeed.

CHO. But ſay, Electra, is the tyrant near?
Or may we ſpeak our thoughts unblamed?

ELE. Thou mayſt;
I had not elſe beyond the palace dared
To wander hither.

CHO. I would fain have aſked thee———

ELE. Aſk what thou wilt, Ægiſthus is far off.

CHO. Touching thy brother then, inform me quick
If aught thou know'ſt that merits firm belief.

ELE. He promiſes, but comes not.

CHO. Things of moment
Require deliberation and delay.

ELE. O! but did I delay to ſave Oreſtes?

CHO. He boaſts a noble nature, and will ne'er
Forget his friends: be confident.

ELE. I am;
Were I not ſo, I had not lived till now.

CHO.

CHO. But ſoft; behold the fair Chryſothemis
Advance this way, and in her hand ſhe bears
Sepulchral offerings to the ſhades below.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHR. Still, my Electra pouring forth thy griefs?
Art thou not yet by ſad experience taught
How little they avail? I too muſt feel
And could reſent, as, were thy ſiſter's power
But equal to her will, our foes ſhould know.
Mean-time with lowered ſail to bear the ſtorm
Befits us beſt, nor, helpleſs as we are,
With idle hopes to meditate revenge;
Yield then with me, and, though impartial juſtice
Plead on thy ſide, remember, if we prize
Or life or liberty, we muſt obey.

ELE. It ill becomes great Agamemnon's daughter
Thus to forget her noble father's worth,
And take a baſe, unworthy mother's part;
For well I ſee from whom thy counſels flow;
Nought from thyſelf thou ſay'ſt but all from her:
Either thy reaſon's loſt, or, if thou haſt it,
Thou haſt forgot thy friends who ſhould be dear
And precious to thee: of thy boaſted hate
Againſt our foes, and what thou vaunt'ſt to do,
If thou hadſt power, I reck not; whilſt with me
Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but ſtill

Diſſuad'ſt

[1] *Sepulchral offerings.* The libations, or ſepulchral offerings, here mentioned, were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; theſe were deſigned to render the ghoſt kind and propitious, and were therefore called χοαι ἡδυπτηριοι or θελκτηριοι; theſe were poured upon the ground or grave-ſtone, and, together with a certain form of words, offered to the deceaſed.

Diſſuad'ſt me from it; is 't not cowardly
To leave me thus? tell me, I beg thee, tell me,
What mighty gain awaits my tame ſubmiſſion,
Should I ſuppreſs my griefs: I can but live,
That I do now, a wretched life indeed!
But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy
Whilſt I can torture them, and to the dead
Pay grateful honours (if to them ſuch care
Aught grateful can beſtow)—thy hate, I fear me,
Is but in word: thou doſt befriend the murtherers:
For me, not all the wealth they could beſtow,
Not all the gifts which they have poured on thee,
Should bind me to 'em: take thy coſtly banquets,
And let thy days with eaſe and pleaſure flow;
Give me but food, and I am ſatisfied.
I wiſh not for thy honours, nor wouldſt thou,
If thou wert wiſe, receive 'em at their hands.
Thou mightſt be daughter to the beſt of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name,
And henceforth all ſhall mark thee as a wretch
Who hath betrayed her father and her friends.

CHO. I do intreat you, let not anger come
Between you thus; you both have reaſoned well,
And much of mutual benefit may flow,
If each to other lend a patient ear.

CHR. Cuſtom, my noble friends, hath made reproach
Familiar to me, and ſo well I know
Her haughty mind, I had been ſilent ſtill,
But that I ſaw the danger imminent,
And came to warn her of the fatal ſtroke,
Which ſoon muſt end her and her griefs together.

ELE. Tell me this mighty danger: if aught more
It thre ten than Electra long hath borne,
I yield me to thy counſels.

CHR.

CHR. Hear me then:
Know, thou art doomed, unleſs thou doſt refrain
Thy clamorous griefs, far from the light of day,
And this thy native ſoil, within a cell
Diſmal and dark to ſpend the poor remains
Of thy ſad life, and there lament thy fate.
ELE. Is it decreed? muſt it in truth be ſo?
CHR. Soon as Ægiſthus ſhall return, it muſt.
ELE. Quick let him come: I long to ſee him here.
CHR. Alas! what dreadful imprecations theſe!
ELE. Would he were preſent, if for this he comes!
CHR. What! to deſtroy thee! is thy mind diſturbed?
ELE. That I might fly for ever from thy ſight.
CHR. Wilt thou not think how to preſerve thy life?
ELE. Mine is a bleſſed life indeed to think of.
CHR. It might be bleſt, if thou would'ſt have it ſo.
ELE. Teach me not baſely to betray my friends.
CHR. I do not; all I aſk thee is to yield
To powers ſuperior.
ELE. Fawn on them thyſelf;
Thou doſt not know Electra.
CHR. Sure it better
Deſerves the name of wiſdom to avoid
Than haſten thy deſtruction.
ELE. No; to die
Were pleaſure, could I but avenge my father.
CHR. Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee.
ELE. 'Tis mean to think ſo.
CHR. Wilt thou not conſent?
ELE. Never, O! never, be my ſoul ſo weak.
CHR. Then to my errand: fare thee well.
ELE. To whom,
Chryſothemis, and whither, doſt thou bear
Thoſe ſacred offerings? CHR.

CHR. To our father's tomb,
From Clytæmneſtra.
ELE. To the man ſhe hated!
The man, my ſiſter——
CHR. Whom ſhe killed, I know
Thou wouldſt ſay.
ELE. Why, what ſhould move her to it?
CHR. If I miſtake not, horrors late impreſſed,
From a ſad viſion.
ELE. O! my country's gods,
Succour me now!
CHR. What hopes doſt thou conceive
From this?
ELE. The dream: and I will tell thee all.
CHR. I know but little of it.
ELE. Tell me that:
Oftimes to words, how few ſoe'er they be,
Is given the power to ſave or to deſtroy.
CHR. Once more to light returned (ſo fame reports)
Before her our loved father did appear.
The royal ſcepter wielded in his hand
Which now Ægiſthus bears whence ſeemed to ſpring
A green and leafy branch, whoſe wide extent
O'er all Mycenæ ſpread its verdant ſhade:

This

Once more to light, &c. In the Chœpheræ of Eſchylus, Clytæmneſtra dreams that ſhe was brought to bed of a dragon, to whom ſhe gives ſuck, and who draws out all her blood. Sophocles, who borrowed this incident from his predeceſſor, has altered and improved it; the circumſtances here related, are more intereſting, and the interpretation more obvious; beſides that, it is rendered inſtrumental to the plan of the drama, by ſending Chryſothemis to her father's tomb, where ſhe finds the offerings of Oreſtes, which prepares the diſcovery of his unexpected arrival.

This did I learn, and this alone, from one
Who liſtened long attentive, while ſhe told
Her viſion to the ſun; hence all her fears,
And hence my deſtined journey.

ELE. By the gods
Let me conjure thee, hear me; if thou doſt not,
Too late ſhalt thou repent, when for thy guilt
Evil o'ertake thee; O! Chryſothemis!
Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb
Bear thou thoſe offerings; 'twere a horrid deed,
From ſuch a woman; give 'em to the winds,
Let 'em be hid, deep buried in the ſands,
And not the ſmalleſt grain eſcape, to reach
That hallowed place; let 'em remain for her,
Safe in the earth till ſhe ſhall meet 'em there.
None but this ſhameleſs, this abandoned woman,
Would e'er with impious offerings thus adorn
The tomb of him ſhe murthered: by the dead
Think'ſt thou ſuch gifts can be with joy received?
Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corſe
Severed his lifeleſs limbs, and on the head

Of

Told her viſion to the ſun. It was cuſtomary among the antients, when they had been terrified by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the ſun, who, they imagined, as he had power to diſpel the darkneſs, could alſo turn aſide all the evils which the preceding night had threatened them with; Apollo was therefore ſtiled αποτροπαιος, or the averter of evil, and had images erected to him under that title.

Severed his lifeleſs limbs. The word εμαχαλιθη, in the original, and which is made uſe of by Æſchylus alſo, is ſuppoſed by the commentators to allude to a ſuperſtitious cuſtom of achroteriſing, or cutting off the external parts of the perſon ſlain, and fixing them under their arm-pits; a kind of charm, which the

Of the poor victim wiped her bloody ſword:
Madneſs to think that offerings and ablutions
Could purge ſuch crimes, or waſh her ſtains away;
Never, O! never: but of this no more:
Inſtant, my ſiſter, thy devoted hair
With theſe diſhevelled locks, and this my zone,
Plain as it is and unadorned, ſhalt thou
Bear to our father; wretched offerings theſe!
But O! 'tis all Electra now can give.
Bear them, and ſuppliant on thy knees implore him
To ſmile propitious, and aſſiſt his children;
Pray for Oreſtes too, that ſoon with power
He may return, and trample on our foes;
So ſhall a fairer tribute one day grace
His honoured tomb, than now we can beſtow.
Truſt me, my ſiſter, we are ſtill his care,
I know we are; from him the viſion came,
The horrid dream that ſhook her guilty ſoul:
Now then, I beg thee, be a friend to me,
Be to thyſelf a friend, a friend to him,
Of all mankind the deareſt, our dead father.

CHO. Well doth the pious virgin ſpeak, and thou
Muſt yield to her requeſts.

CHR. And ſo I will.
Where reaſon dictates, ſtrife ſhould never come;
But quick, diſpatch, fulfil her juſt commands,
Yet, O! my friends, remember, our attempt

Is

murtherer imagined would prevent him from ſending the furies to revenge his murther.

Wiped her bloody ſword. The murtherer wiped the inſtrument of the murther in the hair of the deceaſed, and then waſhed it, perſuaded that this would wipe away the guilt alſo.

Is full of danger, and let nought eſcape
That may betray me to my cruel mother;
For, if it reach her ear, this daring act,
I fear me much, ſhall one day coſt us dear.

[*Exit* Chryſothemis.

CHORUS.

STROPHE

Or my prophetic mind is now no more
Attentive as of old to wiſdom's lore,
Or juſtice comes, with ſpeedy vengeance fraught:
Behold! the goddeſs armed with power appears,
It muſt be ſo, by Clytæmneſtra's fears,
And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought:
Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
Shall hither come, his wrongs to vindicate;
And, in his gore imbrued,
The fatal axe with him ſhall riſe,
Shall aſk another ſacrifice,
And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood.

ANTISTROPHE.

Lo! with unnumbered hands, and countleſs feet,
The fury comes, her deſtined prey to meet;
Deep in the covert hid, ſhe glides unſeen,

Hange

Chorus. This is the firſt ſong or intermede of the Chorus, who, after hearing the dream related by Chryſothemis, draw from it fair omens of Electra's ſucceſs, and vengeance on the murtherers of Agamemnon: It is remarkable that Electra remains on the ſtage all the time; a plain proof, among many others, that (as it is obſerved in the diſſertation) the diviſion of theſe tragedies into acts is merely arbitrary, and of late invention, as it would be abſurd for the principal character to appear thus between the acts.

Hangs o'er the trembling murtherer's head,
Or ſteals to the adulterous bed,
An awful witneſs of the guilty ſcene;
Doubtleſs the dream with all its terrors meant,
For crimes like theſe ſome dreadful puniſhment,
If mortals aught from nightly viſions know,
If truth from great Apollo's ſhrine
Appears in oracles divine,
Preſaging bliſs to come, or threatening future woe.

EPODE.

O! Pelops, to thy country and to thee,
The fatal courſe brought woe and miſery;
For ſince the time when from his chariot thrown,
For thee the guilty wreathe to gain,
The hapleſs Myrtilus was ſlain,
Nought has thy wretched race but grief and ſorrow!

A

The hapleſs Myrtilus. To underſtand this paſſage, it is neceſſary to be acquainted with the following ſtory. Œnomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refuſed to give in marriage, becauſe the oracle declared, that a ſon-in-law would be fatal to him; he promiſed, however, to beſtow his daughter on any man who ſhould conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all who were vanquiſhed by him, ſhould be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and periſhed in the attempt; the horſes of Œnomaus were ſwift as the wind; and conſequently invincible; theſe examples, however, did not deter Pelops, who entered the liſts againſt Œnomaus, and bribed his charioteer, Myrtilus, with a promiſe of half his kingdom, if he ſucceeded; Myrtilus liſtened to his offers, and purpoſely forgot to put the pins into the wheels of his maſter's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the courſe. Pelops eſpouſed Hippodamia, but afterwards, inſtead of performing his promiſe to Myrtilus, choſe rather to get rid of this inſtrument of treachery, by throwing him into the ſea. Mercury, who, it ſeems, was the father of

ACT II.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS abſent, who alone could curb
Thy haughty ſpirit, and licentious tongue;
At large, it ſeems, thou rov'ſt, and unreſtrained,
No deference paid to my authority,
But on thy mother ever pouring forth
Bitter invectives, while the liſtening croud
Are taught to hold me proud, and fierce of ſoul,
A lawleſs tyrant, ſlandering thee and thine:
I am no ſlanderer, I abhor the name,
But oft reviled, of force I muſt reply,
And ſend my ſoul reproaches back upon thee.
Thou ſay'ſt, I ſlew thy father; that alone
Is left to plead for all thy inſolence:
I do confeſs the deed, and glory in it;
I ſlew thy father; yet not I alone,
I had the hand of juſtice to aſſiſt me,
And ſhould have had Electra's: well thou know'ſt,
That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears
Inceſſant flow, that father ſlew his child;
He, he alone, of all the Græcian hoſt,
Gave up his daughter, horrid ſacrifice!
To the offended gods: he never felt
A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them;
Or if he did, why ſlay the innocent?

Myrtilus, revenged the murther of his ſon, by entailing curſes on Pelops and all his poſterity. It appears by this, that the heathens believed that God puniſhed the crimes of fathers upon their children, to the third and fourth generation.

For Greece, thou tell'ſt me: Greece could never claim
A right to what was mine; or did ſhe fall
For Menelaus? he had children too;
Why might not they have died? their parents' guilt,
Source of the war, more juſtly had deſerved it;
Or think'ſt thou death with keener appetite
Could feaſt on mine, and Helen's not afford
As ſweet a banquet? why was all the love,
To me, and to my child, ſo juſtly due,
With laviſh hand, beſtowed on Menelaus?
Was he not then a baſe, inhuman father?
He was: and ſo, could Iphigenia ſpeak,
Thy breathleſs ſiſter, ſhe too would declare:
Know, then, I grieve not; ſhame or penitence
I feel not for the deed; and if to thee
It ſeem ſo heinous, weigh each circumſtance,
Remember what he did, and lay the blame
On him, who well deſerved the fate he ſuffered.

ELE.

He had children too. According to Homer (ſee Odyſſ. b. 4) Menelaus had only one child, Hermione. Heſiod gives him two, Hermione and Nicoſtratus: the latter tradition was more agreeable to Sophocles; becauſe, if Menelaus had but one child, the loſs would have been greater to him than to Agamemnon, who had many; this, we ſee, would deſtroy the force of Clytæmneſtra's argument, which is ſtrengthened by the other ſuppoſition.

Could Iphigenia ſpeak. Clytæmneſtra endeavours to palliate her guilt, by reproaching Agamemnon with the ſacrifice of Iphigenia. Euripides ſtrengthens this plea by the addition of another, which the ladies will allow to have been ſtill more forcible, *viz.* that Agamemnon kept another woman, and even brought her into the ſame houſe with his wife. The fact is thus alluded to by Ovid,

Dum fuit Atrides una contentus, & illa
Caſta fuit; vitio eſt improba facta viri.

ELE. Thou haſt no plea for bitterneſs like this;
Thou canſt not ſay that I provoked thee to it,
I have been ſilent: had I leave to ſpeak,
I could defend an injured father's cauſe,
And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

CLY. I do permit thee; and if modeſt thus
Thou hadſt addreſt me always, thy free ſpeech
Had ne'er offended.

ELE. Haſt thou not confeſt
That thou didſt ſlay my father? whether juſtice
Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confeſs it;
But juſtice never could perſuade thee; no,
I'll tell thee who it was; it was Ægiſthus,
The wretch with whom thou liv'ſt: go aſk the goddeſs,
Th' immortal huntreſs, why the winds were ſtaid
So long at Aulis; but thou muſt not aſk
The chaſte Diana; take it then from me:
My father once, as for the chace prepared,
Careleſs he wandered through her ſacred grove,
Forth from its covert rouſed a ſpotted hind,
Of faireſt form, with towering antlers graced,
Purſued, and ſlew her; of the deity

Thou muſt not aſk the chaſte Diana. A murtherer and adultereſs, like Clytæmneſtra, muſt not dare to approach, or ſpeak to the goddeſs of chaſtity. Clytæmneſtra feels the reproach, but, at the ſame time, to perſuade Electra that ſhe was not affected by it, a few lines after, we find her invoking that goddeſs, "by chaſte Diana, "ſoon as Ægiſthus comes, &c."

My father once, &c. There is certainly an impropriety (though not, as I remember, obſerved by any of the commentators) in relating this ſtory to Clytæmneſtra, who, we muſt ſuppoſe, could be no ſtranger to it. Sophocles, however, thought it might be neceſſary to acquaint the audience with this circumſtance, and therefore took this method to inform them of it.

Something, with pride elate, he uttered then
Diſdainful; quick reſenting the affront,
Latona's daughter ſtaid th Græcian fleet,
Nor would forgive, till for her ſlaughtered beaſt
Th' offending father ſacrificed his child.
Thus Iphigenia fell; and but for her,
Greece ne'er had ſeen, or Ilion's lofty towers,
Or her own native ſoil; the father ſtrove
In vain to ſave, and not for Menelaus
He gave her up at laſt, but for his country.
Suppoſe a brother's fondneſs had prevailed,
And ſhe was given for him; would that excuſe
Thy horrid deed? what law required it of thee?
That law, alone, by which thyſelf muſt fall;
If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fixed.
Plead not ſo poorly then, but tell me why
Thou liv'ſt adulterous thus with a vile ruffian,
Thy baſe aſſiſtant? why are thoſe, who ſprung
From thy firſt nuptials, caſt unkindly forth,
For his new race? was this thy piety,
Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death?
In pure revenge to wed her deadlieſt foe
Was noble; was it not? but I forget,
You are my mother, ſo it ſeems you ſay,
And I muſt hold my peace; but I deny it;
I ſay you are my miſtreſs, not my mother;
A cruel miſtreſs that afflicts my ſoul,
And makes this weary life a burthen to me.
Oreſtes too, the hapleſs fugitive,
Who once eſcaped thy fatal hand, now drags
A loathſome being; him, thou ſay'ſt, I looked for
To join in my revenge, and ſo I did;
I would have been revenged, I tell thee ſo:

Say,

Say, I am baſe, malicious, impudent,
Abuſive, what thou wilt; for if I am,
It ſpeaks my birth, and I reſemble thee.
CHO. Reſentment deep hath fired the virgin's breaſt;
Whether with truth and juſtice on her ſide
She ſpeak, I know not.
CLY. Can they plead for her?
What care, what love, or tenderneſs is due
To an abandoned child, who, ſhameleſs, thus
Reviles a parent? is there, after this,
A crime in nature ſhe would bluſh to act?
ELE. I am not baſe, nor ſhameleſs, as thou call'ſt me,
For know, even now I bluſh for what is paſt,
Indecent warmth, and words that ill become
My tender years, and virgin modeſty;
But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice, urged me to it:
From bad examples, bad alone we learn,
I only erred becauſe I followed thee.
CLY. Impudent wretch! and am I then the cauſe
Of all thy clamorous inſolence?
ELE. Thou art:
Foul is thy ſpeech, becauſe thy deed was foul;
For words from actions flow.
CLY. By chaſte Diana,
Soon as Ægiſthus comes, thy boldneſs meets
Its juſt reward.
ELE. Is this thy promiſed leave,
So lately granted, freely to unfold
What now, incenſed, thou doſt refuſe to hear?
CLY. Have I not heard thee, and, in baſe return,
With luckleſs omen doſt thou now retard
My pious ſacrifice?

With luckleſs omen, &c. The antients were of opinion, that if,

ELE. O! far from me
Be guilt like that; perform it, I beſeech thee;
In holy ſilence ſhall theſe lips be cloſed,
And not a word eſcape to thwart thy purpoſe.

CLY. [Speaking to one of her attendants.]
Hither do thou the ſacred offerings bring,
Of various fruits compoſed, that to the god
Whoſe altars we adorn, my fervent prayer
May riſe accepted, and diſpel my fears.
Hear then, Apollo, great protector, hear
My ſecret vows, for with no friendly ear [ſoftly.]
My voice is heard; her malice would betray,
Should I unveil my heart, each word I uttered,
And ſcatter idle rumours through the croud.
Thus then accept my prayers, Lycean Phœbus! [aloud.]
If in the doubtful viſions of the night,
Which broke my ſlumbers, aught preſaging good
Thou ſeeſt, propitious, O! confirm it all;
But if of dire portent, and fraught with ill,
To me and mine they came, avert the omen,

And

during the time of ſacrifice, they heard any thing melancholy, it was an ill omen; in the beginning of thoſe, therefore, that were public, ſilence was enjoined to all preſent; hence the phraſe of favete linguis.

Hear my ſecret vows. Brumoy obſerves on this paſſage, that Clytæmneſtra here retires towards a corner of the ſcene, near the altar, where ſhe makes her prayer, and offers the ſacrifice, whilſt Electra remains upon the ſtage at a little diſtance from her; we muſt ſuppoſe her therefore, ſpeaking part of this ſpeech aloud, and part ſoftly, ſo as not to be overheard by Electra: ſhe implores Apollo to mark rather the purport, than the words of her prayer; this ſhe utters in a low voice, till ſhe comes to Lycean Phœbus, &c. which ſhe ſpeaks aloud.

And ſend the evil back upon my foes!
O! if there are, whoſe fraudful arts conſpire
To caſt me forth from all my preſent bliſs,
Let 'em not proſper, but protect me ſtill!
Grant me to live and reign in quiet here,
To ſpend each happy hour with thoſe I love;
With thoſe my children who have ne'er offended
By malice, pride, and bitterneſs of ſoul;
Grant this, indulgent Phœbus! what remains
Unaſked, thou ſeeſt; for nought eſcapes the eye
Of gods, ſuch knowledge have the ſons of Jove.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Gov. Is this the royal palace of Ægiſthus?
Cho. Stranger, it is.
Gov. And this, for ſuch her form
And look majeſtic ſpeak her, is his queen;
Is it not ſo?
Cho. It is.
Gov. Great ſovereign, hail!
With joyful news I come, and from a friend,
To thee, and to Ægiſthus.
Cly. Stranger, welcome;
Say, firſt, from whom thy meſſage?
Gov. From Phanoteus;
A Phocian ſends thee things of utmoſt moment.

With thoſe my children, &c. Iphianaſſa and Chryſothemis, who had not affronted her, in oppoſition to Eelectra, who had.

What remains unaſked, &c. Moſt probably the death of Oreſtes and Electra, which ſhe did not dare to mention in the preſence of her daughter. Clytæmneſtra's character is finely drawn; her very prayers we ſee are wicked, and agreeable to her actions.

CLY. Of moment, ſay'ſt thou? what? impart them quick,
Of friendly import, if from thence they come,
I know they muſt be.

GOV. Briefly, then, 'tis this:
Oreſtes is no more.

ELE. Undone Electra!
Now am I loſt indeed.

CLY. What ſay'ſt thou? ſpeak;
Regard not her; go on.

GOV. I ſay again,
Oreſtes is no more.

ELE. Then what am I?
I too am nothing.

CLY. [to Electra] Get thee hence! away!
Diſturb us not: moſt welcome meſſenger; [to the Governor.]
Go on, I beg thee, let me hear it all;
Say how he died; tell every circumſtance.

GOV. For that I came; and I will tell thee all.
Know, then, Oreſtes, at the Pythian games,
Eager for glory, met aſſembled Greece;
Soon as the herald's far-reſounding voice
Proclaimed the courſe, the graceful youth appeared,
And was by all admired: ſucceſsful ſoon
He reached the goal, and bore his prize away.

Ne'er

Oreſtes at the Pythian games, &c. Our modern critics will, perhaps, be of opinion, that this deſcription of the Pythian games, ſo much admired by the favourers of antiquity, is too long, and rather interrupts than carries on the buſineſs of the drama; it will be in vain therefore to inform them, that this circumſtantial detail was neceſſary to give the ſtory an air of veracity in the eyes of the perſon to whom it is related, at the ſame time that the author had, by this means, an opportunity of ſhewing his poetical and deſcriptive talents in the narration.

Ne'er did theſe eyes behold ſuch feats performed
By mortal ſtrength; in every courſe ſuperior,
He roſe victorious: theme of every tongue
Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' ſon,
Who led the Græcian hoſt; but O! in vain
Doth human valour ſtrive, when power divine
Purſues vindictive! the ſucceeding morn
Uproſe the ſun, and with him all the train
Of youthful rivals in the chariot-race;
One from Achaia, one from Sparta, came,
Of Afric's ſons advanced a noble pair,
And joined the throng; with theſe, Oreſtes drove
His ſwift Theſſalian ſteeds; Ætolia next,
For yellow courſers famed; and next Magneſia;
And Athens, built by hands divine, ſent forth
Her ſkilful charioteer; an Ænian next
Drove his white horſes through the field; and laſt

A brave

In every courſe ſuperior, &c. The πενταθλον or quinquertium here alluded to, conſiſted of five exerciſes, viz. leaping, running, throwing, darting, and wreſtling; Oreſtes conquered in every one of them; this was the buſineſs of the firſt day of the games, the ſecond was employed in the chariot-race, which is here minutely and accurately deſcribed.

One from Achaia, &c. In the Greek, it is the firſt from Achaia, the ſecond from Sparta, and ſo on to the tenth, which would have made an aukward appearance in Engliſh; I have therefore taken the liberty to vary the method of enumerating them in the tranſlation.

Athens built by hands divine. Sophocles, who was an Athenian, takes every opportunity of doing honour to his countrymen; Athens, we ſee, is diſtinguiſhed by him in the liſt as built by hands divine; and the Athenian charioteer, ſelected from the rival chiefs, to contend with his hero Oreſtes, who had eaſily overcome all the reſt.

A brave Bœotian cloſed the warrior train.
And now in order ranged, as each by lot
Determined ſtood, forth at the trumpet's ſound
They ruſhed together, ſhook their glittering reins,
And laſhed their foaming courſers o'er the plain.
Loud was the din of rattling cars, involved
In duſty clouds; cloſe on each other preſt
The rival youths, together ſtopt, and turned
Together all: the hapleſs Ænian firſt,
His firy ſteeds, impatient of ſubjection,
Entangled on the Lybian chariot hung;
Confuſion ſoon, and terror, through the croud
Diſaſtrous ſpread; the jarring axles rung;
Wheel within wheel now cracked, till Chryſa's field
Was with the ſcattered ruins quite o'erſpread.
Th' Athenian, cautious, viewed the diſtant danger,
Drew in the rein, and turned his car aſide,
Then paſt them all. Oreſtes, who, ſecure
Of conqueſt, lagged behind, with eager pace
Now urged his rapid courſe, and ſwift purſued.
Sharp was the conteſt; now th' Athenian firſt,
And now Oreſtes, o'er his courſers hung,
Now ſide by ſide they ran; when to the laſt
And fatal goal they came, Atrides' ſon,
As chance with ſlackened rein he turned the car,
Full on the pillar ſtruck, tore from the wheel
Its brittle ſpokes, and from his ſeat down dropt
Precipitate; entangled in the reins,
His firy courſers dragged him o'er the field,
Whilſt ſhrieking crouds with pity viewed the youth,
Whoſe gallant deeds deſerved a better fate.
Scarce could they ſtop the rapid car, or looſe
His mangled corſe, ſo drenched in blood, ſo changed,

That

That ſcarce a friend could ſay it was Oreſtes.
Straight on the pile they burnt his ſad remains,
And, in an urn encloſed, a choſen few,
From Phocis ſent, have brought his aſhes home,
To reap due honours in his native land.
Thus have I told thee all; a dreadful tale!
But, O! how far more dreadful to behold it,
And be, like me, a witneſs of the ſcene!

CHO. Ah me! the royal race, the antient houſe,
Of my loved maſter, is no more!

CLY. Great Jove!
Th' event was happy, but 'tis mixed with woe.
For, O! 'tis better to reflect, that life
And ſafety muſt be purchaſed by misfortunes.

GOV. Why grieve you, madam?

CLY. 'Tis a bitter taſk
To bring forth children; though a mother's wronged,
A mother cannot hate the babe ſhe bore.

GOV. Then with ungrateful news in vain I came.

CLY. O no; moſt welcome is the man who brings
Such joyful tidings, that a thankleſs child
Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
To live a voluntary exile from me;
Ne'er to theſe eyes returned, but abſent raged,
And threatened vengeance for his murthered father;
Day had no reſt for me, nor did the night

Bring

'Tis mixed with woe. Dacier highly commends the art of the poet in Clytæmneſtra's expreſſion of uneaſineſs at the death of Oreſtes; as to have received the news without any marks of tenderneſs or compaſſion would have been ſhocking to nature and humanity. But perhaps a better reaſon for this diſſembled ſorrow may be drawn, from her willingneſs to preſerve ſome decency and appearance of virtue in the eyes of the meſſenger.

Bring needful ſlumbers, thoughts of inſtant death
Appalled me ever; but my fears are gone;
He cannot hurt me now, nor worſe than him,
This vile, domeſtic plague, who haunts me ſtill,
To ſuck my vital blood; but henceforth ſafe,
Spite of her threats, ſhall Clytæmneſtra live.

ELE. Now, my Oreſtes, I indeed muſt mourn
Thy cruel fate, embittered by reproach,
And from a mother's tongue; this is not well.

CLY. With him it is, and would it were with thee!

ELE. Attend, O! Nemeſis! and hear the dead!

CLY. She heard that voice which beſt deſerved her ear,
And her decrees are juſt.

ELY. Go on, proud woman;
Inſult us now, whilſt fortune ſmiles upon thee.

CLY. Doſt thou then hope that we ſhall fall hereafter?

ELE. No! we are fallen ourſelves, and cannot hurt thee.

CLY. Thrice worthy is that meſſenger of joy,
Whoſe gladſome news ſhall ſtop thy clamorous tongue.

GOV. My taſk performed, permit me to retire.

CLY. No, ſtranger, that were an affront to thee,
And to our friend who ſent thee here. Go in,
And leave that noiſy wretch to bellow forth
Her ſorrows, and bewail her loſt Oreſtes.

[*Exeunt* Cly. and Gov.

ELE. Marked ye, my friends, did ye obſerve her tears?
Did ſhe lament him? did the mother weep
For her loſt child? O no; ſhe ſmiled and left me;
Wretched Electra! O my dear Oreſtes!
Thou haſt undone me; thou wert all my hope:
I thought thou wouldſt have lived to aid my vengeance
For our loved father's death: deprived of both
Whither ſhall I betake me! left at laſt

A ſlave

A ſlave to thoſe whom moſt on earth I hate,
The cruel murtherers; muſt it then be ſo?
Never, O never! thus bereft of all,
Here will I lay me down, and on this ſpot
End my ſad days; if it offend the tyrants,
Let 'em deſtroy me; it will be kindly done;
Life is a pain; I would not wiſh to keep it.

CHO. Where is thy thunder, Jove? or, where thy power
O Phœbus! if thou doſt behold this deed
And not avenge it?

ELE.

Here will I lay me down. Electra, ſhocked at the behaviour of Clytæmneſtra, and apprehenſive of ſtill worſe treatment than ſhe had ever yet received, is reſolved never to re-enter the palace of Æghiſtus; but lays herſelf down in anguiſh on the ground to lament her misfortunes. There is ſomething not unlike this in Shakeſpear's king John, where Conſtance throws herſelf on the earth. See king John, act 3, ſcene 1.

Where is thy thunder, Jove, &c. I ſee no reaſon for making the alteration here propoſed by Dacier, and putting theſe words into the mouth of Electra; ſurely the reflection comes naturally from the chorus, who had been witneſſes of Clytæmneſtra's behaviour on the news of Oreſtes' death. It may not be improper here to obſerve, that this is generally called the ſecond intermede, or ſong of the chorus; who, in conjunction with Electra, remaining on the ſtage, as at the end of the firſt act, ſing a kind of dirge, lamenting the miſeries of their friend, and endeavouring to comfort her under them; this is all in Strophe and Antiſtrophe, and moſt probably was ſet to muſic: it ſhould, therefore, according to my plan, have been put into rhyme, to diſtinguiſh it from the other parts of the drama; but as it conſiſts of queſtion and anſwer, it would have made but a ſtrange and uncouth appearance in that garb. I have therefore preſerved the blank verſe, which my readers will, I believe, think with me, was much more ſuitable to it.

ELE. Oh!
CHO. Why mourn'ſt thou thus?
ELE. Alas!
CHO. O! do not groan thus.
ELE. Thou deſtroy'ſt me.
CHO. How have I hurt thee?
ELE. Why thus vainly try
To give me comfort, when I know he's dead?
You but inſult my woes.
CHO. Yet weep not thus;
Think on the golden bracelet that betrayed
Amphiarus, who now—
ELE. O! me!
CHO. —In bliſs
Immortal reigns among the ſhades below.
ELE. Alas!
CHO. No more; a woman was the cauſe,
The accurſed cauſe.
ELE. She ſuffered, did ſhe not?
CHO. She did; ſhe periſhed.
ELE. Yes; I know it well;
He found a kind avenger of his wrongs,
But I have none, for he is raviſhed from me.
CHO. Thou art indeed unhappy.
ELE. 'Tis too true;
I am

The golden bracelet that betrayed Amphiaraus. Amphiaraus was a famous ſoothſayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was ſolicited by Adraſtus to aſſiſt Polynices, his ſon-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreſeeing by his art, that if he went he ſhould be ſlain, hid himſelf, but was diſcovered by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the ſiege of Thebes, periſhed there. Alcmæon, his ſon, revenged his father's death, and ſlew his mother Eriphyle.

I am moſt wretched, it beats hard upon me;
My ſorrows never ceaſe.
CHO. We ſee thy woes.
ELE. Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort
There is no hope.
CHO. What ſay'ſt thou?
ELE. There is none,
None left for me; my noble brother ſlain.
CHO. Death is the lot of human race.
ELE. But, oh!
Not death like his; entangled in the reins,
His mangled body dragged along the field.
CHO. A ſtrange, unthought of chance.
ELE. And then to fall
A wretched ſtranger in a foreign land.
CHO. O! horrible!
ELE. No ſiſter there to cloſe
His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb,
Or pay the laſt ſad tributary tear.

ACT III.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

FORGIVE me, ſiſter, if my haſty ſteps
Preſs unexpected on thee; but I come
With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils,
And make thee happy.

ELE.

My haſty ſteps, &c. Camerarius, in a note on this paſſage, very gravely remarks, that a lady ſhould never run, "quoniam in mulieribus cunctabunda omnia magis probantur," "becauſe it is more becoming in women to do every thing deliberately." Dacier likewiſe, with the refinement of a true French critic, obſerves, that it

ELE. What canſt thou have found,
To ſoften ills that will admit no cure?
CHR. Oreſtes is arrived; as ſure as here
I ſtand before thee, the dear youth is come.
ELE. Canſt thou then make a mockery of my woes;
Or doſt thou rave?
CHR. No, by our father's gods,
I do not mean to ſcoff; but he is come.
ELE. Alas! who told thee ſo? What tongue deceived
Thy credulous ear?
CHR. Know, from myſelf alone
I learned the truth, and confirmations ſtrong
Oblige me to believe it.
ELE. What firm proof
Canſt thou produce? what haſt thou ſeen or known
To raiſe ſuch flattering hopes?
CHR. O! by the gods
I beg thee but to hear me, then approve
Or blame, impartial.
ELE. If to tell thy tale
Can give thee pleaſure, ſay it; I attend.
CHR. Know then, that ſoon as to our father's tomb
Eager I came, my wondering eyes beheld
Down from its ſide a milky fountain flow,
As lately poured by ſome benignant hand;
With various flowers, the ſacred ſpot adorned,
Encreaſed my doubts; on every ſide I looked

And

would be highly indecent in a virgin and a princeſs to walk faſt: Sophocles, ſays he, ne manque pas à une ſeule bein-ſéance. Of ſuch ſagacious animadverſions as theſe, do principally conſiſt the illuſtrations of both the antient and modern commentators on Sophocles; ſcarce one of which (Brumoy excepted) ſeems to have read him with any taſte or judgment.

And liſtened long, impatient for the tread
Of human footſteps there; but all was peace,
Fearleſs approaching then the hallowed ſpot,
I ſaw it ſpread with freſh devoted hair;
Inſtant my ſoul recalled its deareſt hope;
Nor doubted whence the pious offerings came;
I ſnatched them up and ſilent gazed, while joy
Sprang in my heart, and filled my eyes with tears;
They were, they muſt be his; ourſelves alone
Excepted, who could bring them? 'twas not I,
And 'tis not given to thee to leave theſe walls
E'en for the gods; our mother ſcarce would do
So good an office; or e'en grant ſhe might,
We muſt have known it ſoon; be confident,
It was Oreſtes then; rejoice, Electra,
Siſter, rejoice; the ſame deſtructive power
Doth not for ever rule; behold at laſt
A milder god, and happier days appear.

ELE. Madneſs, and folly! how I pity thee!

CHR. Have I not brought moſt joyful tidings to thee?

ELE. Alas thou know'ſt not where nor what thou art.

CHR. Not know it? not believe what I have ſeen;

Our mother ſcarce, &c. This aſſertion may probably appear ſtrange from the mouth of Chryſothemis, who had herſelf ſo lately been ſent by Clytæmneſtra with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon; why therefore might not ſhe have made theſe libations alſo? There is no way of reconciling this ſeeming inconſiſtency, but by ſuppoſing that the libations here mentioned, were of a different nature from the former; the firſt were an expiatory offering to turn aſide the vengeance of the deceaſed; the laſt, of that kind which was generally made uſe of to ſignify the peculiar love and affection of thoſe who made them.

ELE. I tell thee, wretched as thou art, he's dead;
He and thy hoped-for bliſs are gone together!
Thou muſt not think of it.

CHR. A wretch indeed
I am, if this be ſo; but O! from whom,
Where, didſt thou learn the fatal news?

ELE. From one,
Who was a witneſs of his death.

CHR. Where is he?
Amazement chills my ſoul.

ELE. He is within;
And no unwelcome gueſt to Clytæmneſtra.

CHR. Alas! who then could bring thoſe pious gifts?

ELE. Some friend to loſt Oreſtes, placed them there.

CHR. I flew with joy to tell thee better news,
And little thought to hear ſo ſad a tale.
The griefs I came to cure, are preſent ſtill,
And a new weight of woes is come upon us.

ELE. But know, my ſiſter, all may yet be well,
If thou wilt hear me.

CHR. Can I raiſe the dead?

ELE. I am not mad that I ſhould aſk it of thee.

CHR. What wouldſt thou have me do?

ELE. I'd have thee act
As I ſhall dictate to thee.

CHR.

He's dead. The hopes and joy of Chryſothemis are finely contraſted by the grief and deſpair of Electra. One brings the news of his arrival, the other of his death; thus the ſpectator, who is already acquainted with the truth, is made to ſympathize with the unhappy ſiſters, and grows impatient for the diſcovery. Every ſubordinate circumſtance, we ſee, by the artful conduct of the poet, is introduced to prepare the principal event, and heighten the terror and ſurpriſe of the cataſtrophe.

CHR. If aught good
It may produce, I do conſent.
ELE. Remember,
That if we hope to proſper, we muſt bear;
Succeſs, in all that's human, muſt depend
On patience and on toil.
CHR. I know it well,
And ſtand reſolved to bear my part in all.
ELE. Hear then the ſolemn purport of my ſoul.
Thou know'ſt too well how friendleſs and forlorn
We both are left, by death bereaved of all
Who could ſupport us; whilſt Oreſtes lived,
I cheriſhed flattering thoughts of ſweet revenge,
But he is gone, and thou art now my hope.
Yes, thou muſt join (for I will tell thee all)
With thy Electra to deſtroy Ægiſthus;
To kill the murtherer, why ſhould we delay?
Is aught of comfort left? thou canſt but weep
Thy raviſhed fortunes torn unjuſtly from thee;
Thou canſt but mourn thy loſs of nuptial rites,
And each domeſtic bliſs; for O! my ſiſter,
The tyrant cannot be ſo weak of ſoul,
As e'er to ſuffer our deteſted race
To ſend new branches forth for his deſtruction:
Aſſiſt me then; ſo ſhalt thou beſt deſerve
A father's praiſes and a brother's love;
So ſhalt thou ſtill, as thou wert born, be free,
And gain a partner worthy of thy bed.
Doſt thou not hear th' applauding voice of fame,
And every tongue conſpire to praiſe the deed?
Will they not mark us as we paſs along,
And cry aloud, "Behold the noble pair!
"The pious ſiſters who preſerved their race,

" Whoſe daring ſouls, unawed by danger, ſought
" The tyrant's life, regardleſs of their own.
" What love to theſe, what reverence is due!
" Theſe ſhall th' aſſembled nation throng to praiſe,
" And every feaſt with public honours crown,
" The fit reward of more than female virtue!"
Thus will they talk, my ſiſter, whilſt we live,
And after death our names ſhall be immortal.
Aid then a brother's, aid a ſiſter's cauſe,
Think on thy father's wrongs, preſerve Electra,
Preſerve thyſelf; and, O! remember well,
That, to the noble mind, a life diſhonoured,
Is infamy and ſhame.

CHO. Be prudence now
The guide of both.

CHR. Her mind was ſure diſturbed,
My friends, or ſhe would ne'er have talked ſo wildly.
Tell me, I beg thee tell me, my Electra,
How couldſt thou think ſo raſh an enterprize
Could e'er ſucceed, or how requeſt my aid?
Haſt thou conſidered what thou art? a woman,
Weak and defenceleſs, to thy foes unequal;
Fortune, thou ſeeſt, each hour flows in upon them,
Nor deigns to look on us: what hand ſhall deal
The fatal blow and paſs unpuniſhed for it?
Take heed, my ſiſter, leſt, thy counſel heard,
A heavier fate than what we now lament
Fall on us both; what will our boaſted fame
Avail us then? It is not death alone
We have to fear; to die is not the worſt
Of human ills, it is to wiſh for death
And be refuſed the boon; conſider well,
E'er we deſtroy ourſelves and all our race.

Be patient, dear Electra; for thy words,
As they had ne'er been uttered, here they reſt:
Learn to be wiſe at laſt, and when thou know'ſt
Reſiſtance vain, ſubmit to powers ſuperior.

CHO. Submit, convinced that prudence is the firſt
Of human bleſſings.

ELE. 'Tis as I expected;
I knew full well thou wouldſt reject my counſel,
But I can act alone; nor ſhall this arm
Shrink at the blow, or leave its work unfiniſhed.

CHR. Would thou hadſt ſhewn this ſo much vaunted
When our loved father died! [proweſs

ELE. I was the ſame
By nature then, but of a weaker mind.

CHR. Be ſure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

ELE. Thy aid will ne'er increaſe it.

CHR. 'Twill be wanted:
For thoſe who act thus raſhly, muſt expect
The fate they merit.

ELE. I admire thy prudence,
But I deteſt thy cowardice.

CHR. I hear thee
With patience; for the time muſt one day come
When thou ſhalt praiſe me.

ELE. Never.

CHR. Be that left
For time to judge; enough remains.

ELE. Away;
There's no dependence on thee.

CHR. But there is,
Hadſt thou a mind diſpoſed for its acceptance.

ELE. Go, tell thy mother all.

CHR. I am not yet
So much thy enemy.

ELE.

ELE. And yet would lead me
To infamy.
CHR. To ſafety and to wiſdom.
ELE. Muſt I then judge as thy ſuperior reaſon
May dictate to me?
CHR. When thy better mind
Shall come, I'll not refuſe to follow thee.
ELE. Pity who talks ſo well, ſhould act ſo poorly!
CHR. That cenſure falls on thee.
ELE. What I have ſaid
Is truth.
CHR. Truth, ſiſter, may be dangerous.
ELE. Rather than thus ſubmit I will not live.
CHR. Hereafter thou wilt praiſe me.
ELE. I ſhall act
As ſeems moſt fit, nor wait for thy direction.
CHR. Art thou reſolved then? wilt thou not repent
And take my counſel?
ELE. Counſel, ſuch as thine,
Is of all ills the worſt.
CHR. Becauſe, Electra,
Thou doſt not ſeem to underſtand it.
ELE. Know, then,
That long e'er this, I had determined all.
CHR. Then fare thee well; thou canſt not bear my words,
Nor I thy actions.
ELE. Go thy ways; henceforth
I will not commune with thee; nor thy prayers,
No, nor thy tears, ſhould ever bend me to it;
Such idle commerce were the height of folly.
CHR. If thou doſt think this wiſdom, think ſo ſtill;
But when deſtruction comes, thou wilt approve
My better counſel, and be wiſe too late. [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Man's ungrateful, wretched race
Shall the birds of heaven disgrace,
Whose ever watchful, ever impious young,
Protect the feeble parent whence they sprung!
But if the blast of angry Jove
Hath power to strike, or justice reigns above,
Not long unpunished shall such crimes remain;
When thou, O fame! the messenger of woe,
Shalt bear these tidings to the realms below,
Tidings to Grecia's chiefs, of sorrow and of pain.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Bid the sad Atridæ mourn
Their house by cruel faction torn;
Tell 'em, no longer by affection joined,
The tender sisters bear a friendly mind;
The poor Electra, now alone,
Making her fruitless, solitary moan,
Like Philomela, weeps her father's fate;
Fearless of death, and every human ill,
Resolved her steady vengeance to fulfil;
Was ever child so good, or piety so great!

Man's ungrateful, &c. This, according to the received division into five acts, is the third song or intermede of the chorus, and closes the second act, which we may observe is thus made to consist of only a single scene; an absurdity which need not be pointed out to the judicious reader. The chorus, in this song, struck by the piety and resolution of Electra, lament her condition, and blame the coldness of Chrysothemis, who had refused to join her in revenging the death of their father.

STROPHE II.

Still are the virtuous and the good,
By adverſe fortune unſubdued,
Nor e'er will ſtoop to infamy and ſhame;
Thus Electra dauntleſs roſe,
The war to wage with virtue's foes,
To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Far, far above thy enemies,
In power and ſplendor mayſt thou riſe,
And future bliſs compenſate preſent woe!
For thou haſt ſhewn thy pious love,
By all that's dear to heaven above,
Or ſacred held by mortals here below.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

ORESTES, PYLADES, (with ATTENDANTS) ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

SAY virgins, if by right inſtruction led
This way, I tend to———

CHO. Whither wouldſt thou go?

ORE. The palace of Ægiſthus.

CHO. Stranger, well
Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

ORE. Who, then, amongſt your train ſhall kindly ſpeak
A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news.
Of higheſt import?

CHO. Be that office her's, [pointing to Electra.
Whom, bound by nature's ties, it beſt befits.

ORE. Go, then, and ſay, from Phocis are arrived
Who beg admittance to the king.

ELE.

ELE. Alas!
And com'ſt thou, then, to prove the dreadful tale,
Already told?

ORE. What you have heard, I know not;
But of Oreſtes came I here to ſpeak,
By Strophius's command.

ELE. What is it? ſay;
O how I dread thy meſſage!

ORE. [ſhewing the urn.] Here, behold
His poor remains———

ELE. O! loſt, undone Electra!
'Tis then too plain, and miſery is compleat.

ORE. If for Oreſtes thus thy ſorrows flow,
Know that within this urn his aſhes lie.

ELE. Do they indeed? then let me, by the gods
I do intreat thee, let me fnatch them from thee;
Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate,
And mourn our hapleſs race.

ORE. Give her the urn,
Whoe'er ſhe be; for not with hoſtile mind
She craves the boon; perhaps ſome friend, perhaps
By blood united.

ELE. [taking the urn.] O! ye dear remains
Of my Oreſtes, the moſt loved of men!

How

What you have heard I know not. To prevent any ſuſpicion of fraud or connivance, Oreſtes pretends to be an utter ſtranger to the meſſage brought by the governor. The news coming thus by different hands, and at different times, confirm the report more ſtrongly, and heightens the ſurpriſe at the diſcovery.

Whoe'er ſhe be. Oreſtes muſt already imagine, that the perſon he talked to was one of his ſiſters; but, as he had been ſo long abſent, could not be ſure that it was Electra; the chorus ſoon after puts him out of doubt by mentioning her name.

How do I ſee thee now! how much unlike
What my fond hopes preſaged, when laſt we parted!
I ſent thee forth with all the bloom of youth
Freſh on thy cheek, and now, O! diſmal change!
I bear thee in theſe hands an empty ſhade.
Would I had died e'er I had ſent thee hence,
E'er I had ſaved thee from the tyrant's hand!
Would thou hadſt died thyſelf that dreadful day,
And joined thy murthered father in the tomb,
Rather than thus a wretched exile fallen,
Far from thy ſiſter, in a foreign land!
I was not there with pious hands to waſh
Thy breathleſs corpſe, or from the greedy flame
To gather up thy aſhes; what have all
My pleaſing toils, my fruitleſs cares availed,
E'en from thy infant years, that as a mother
I watched thee ſtill, and as a mother loved?
I would not truſt thee to a ſervant's hand,
But was myſelf the guardian of thy youth,
Thy dear companion; all is gone with thee;
Alas! thy death, like the devouring ſtorm,
Hath borne down all; my father is no more,

And

To waſh thy breathleſs corpſe. The cuſtom of waſhing the bodies of the dead is very antient; this office was always performed by the neareſt relations; Socrates, as we are informed by Plato, waſhed himſelf before his execution, probably to prevent its being done by ſtrangers; Alceſtis, likewiſe in Euripides, after ſhe had determined to die for her huſband, waſhes herſelf. The Romans adopted this cuſtom from the Greeks; and we find the mother of Euryalus, making the ſame complaint as Electra,

Nec te tua funera mater
Produxi preſſive oculos aut vulnera lavi.

VIRG. Æn. l. 9.

And thou art gone, and I am going too;
Our foes rejoice; our mother, mad with joy,
Smiles at our miſeries; that unnatural mother,
She whom thou oft haſt promiſed to deſtroy;
But cruel fate hath blaſted all my hopes,
And for my dear Oreſtes left me nought
But this poor ſhadow: O! th' accurſed place,
Where I had ſent thee! O! my hapleſs brother,
Thou haſt deſtroyed Electra; take me, then,
O! take me to thee! let this urn encloſe
My aſhes too, and duſt to duſt be joined,
That we may dwell together once again;
In life united by one hapleſs fate,
I would not wiſh in death to be divided;
The dead are free from ſorrows.

CHO. Fair Electra!
Do not indulge thy griefs; but, O! remember,
Sprung from a mortal like thyſelf, Oreſtes
Was mortal too; that we are mortal all.

ORE. [aſide.] What ſhall I ſay? I can refrain no longer.

ELE. Why this emotion?

ORE. [looking at Electra.] Can it be Electra?
That lovely form!

ELE. It is, indeed, that wretch.

ORE. O! dreadful!

ELE. Stranger, doſt thou weep for me!

ORE. By impious hands to periſh thus!

ELE. For me
Doubtleſs thou weep'ſt, for I am changed indeed.

ORE.

Duſt to duſt. In the original, it is την μηδεν εις το μηδεν, "nothing to nothing;" I have taken the liberty to adopt a phraſe familiar to ourſelves, and which equally expreſſes the ſenſe of my author.

ORE. Of nuptial rites, and each domeſtic joy
To live, deprived!
ELE. Why doſt thou gaze upon me?
ORE. Alas! I did not know I was ſo wretched.
ELE. Why, what hath made thee ſo?
ORE. I ſee thy woes.
ELE. Not half of them.
ORE. Can there be worſe than theſe?
ELE. To live with murtherers!
ORE. What murtherers, whom?
ELE. The murtherers of my father; bound to ſerve them.
ORE. Who binds thee?
ELE. One who calls herſelf a mother;
A name ſhe little merits.
ORE. But ſay, how?
Doth ſhe with-hold the means of life, or act
With brutal violence to thee?
ELE. Both alas!
Are my hard lot; ſhe tries a thouſand means
To make me wretched.
ORE. And will none aſſiſt,
Will none defend thee?
ELE. None. My only hope
Lies buried there.
ORE. O! how I pity thee!
ELE. 'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me,
None but thyſelf; art thou indeed a ſtranger.
Or doth ſome nearer tie unite our ſorrows?
ORE. I could unfold a tale;——but, ſay, theſe virgins,
May I depend on them?
ELE. They are our friends,
And faithful all.
ORE. Then lay the urn aſide,
And I will tell thee.

ELE.

ELE. Do not take it from me;
Do not, dear ſtranger.
ORE. But I muſt indeed.
ELE. Do not, I beg thee.
ORE. Come, you'll not repent it.
ELE. O! my poor brother! if thy dear remains
Are wreſted from me, I am moſt unhappy.
ORE. No more; thou muſt not grieve for him.
ELE. Not grieve
For my Oreſtes!
ORE. No; you ſhould not weep.
ELE. Am I unworthy of him then?
ORE. O! no!
But do not grieve.
ELE Not when I bear the aſhes,
Of my dear brother!
ORE. But they are not there,
Unleſs by fiction, and a well-wrought tale
That hath deceived thee.
ELE. Where then is his tomb?
ORE. The living need none.
ELE. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou?
ORE. Truth.
ELE. Does he then live?
ORE. If I have life, he lives.
ELE. And art thou he?
ORE. Look here, and be convinced;
This mark, 'tis from our father. ELE.

The living need none. The Greek is τῳ ζωντος ουκ ἐϛι ταφος, which I have tranſlated literally. Brumoy, who is ſeldom guilty of miſtakes, has let the ſenſe ſlip him, and only ſays, "il eſt plein de vie."

This mark. What this mark was, has greatly puzzled the commentators; the ſcholiaſt, whoſe conjectures are generally whimſi-

ELE. O! bleſt hour!
ORE. Bleſſed indeed!
ELE. Art thou then here?
ORE. I am.
ELE. Do I embrace thee?
ORE. Mayſt thou do it long!
ELE. O! my companions! O! my deareſt friends!
Do ye not ſee Oreſtes, once by art
And cruel fiction torn from life and me,
But now by better art to life reſtored?

CHO.

cal, will needs have it to be ſome remains of the ivory ſhoulder of Pelops, which was viſible in all his deſcendants, as thoſe of Cadmus were marked with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius, and after him Brumoy, call it a ring, or ſeal, which indeed is the moſt natural interpretation of the Greek word σφραγις; though it may be ſaid, in the ſupport of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and therefore a better proof of identity in regard to the perſon of Oreſtes.

Art thou then here? This diſcovery is doubtleſs the principal and moſt intereſting ſcene in the tragedy of Electra, and, upon the whole, much better conducted by Sophocles than by either of his rivals on the ſame ſubject. The effect which it had upon the audience, was, we may imagine, equal to its merit. Aulus Gellius tells us a remarkable ſtory of a certain actor, named Polus, who having undertaken the part of Electra, in order to enter more fully into the character he was to repreſent, brought upon the ſtage an urn, containing the aſhes of his own ſon, which he wept over and embraced as the aſhes of Oreſtes; his feelings were ſo intenſe, and his performance ſo exquiſite on this occaſion, that the ſpectators no longer conſidered it as a mere repreſentation, but were filled with real grief, and diſſolved in tears.

Dacier is of opinion, that the dialogue between Oreſtes and Electra on this occaſion, is too prolix, and muſt be ſhortened before it could meet with any applauſe on a modern theatre.

CHO. Daughter, we do! and ſee 'midſt all our woes,
From every eye faſt flow the tears of joy.
ELE. O! ye are come, my friends, in happieſt hour,
E'en to behold, to find again the man
Whom your ſouls wiſhed for, ye are come.
CHO. We are;
But O! in ſilence hide thy joys, Electra.
ELE. Wherefore in ſilence?
CHO. Leſt our foes within
Should hear thee.
ELE. Never by the virgin power
Of chaſte Diana, will I hide my joys,
Or meanly ſtoop to fear an idle throng
Of helpleſs women.
ORE. Women have their power,
And that thou know'ſt.
ELE. Alas! and ſo I do;
For O! thou haſt called back the ſad remembrance
Of that misfortune which admits no cure,
And ne'er can be forgot.
ORE. A fitter time
May come, when we muſt think of that.
ELE. All times,
All hours, are fit to talk of juſtice in,
And beſt the preſent, now when I am free.
ORE. Thou art ſo, be ſo ſtill.
ELE. What's to be done?
ORE. Talk not, when prudence ſhould reſtrain thy tongue.

ELE.

O! ye are come, &c. From this place, to that ſpeech of Oreſtes which begins with, ſpend not thy time, &c. and which contains in the Greek near fifty ſhort lines, the original is in Strophe and Antiſtrophe: I have made no change in the meaſure of the tranſlation, for the reaſon given in a preceding note.

ELE. Who ſhall reſtrain it? who ſhall bind Electra
To fearful ſilence, when Oreſtes comes?
When thus I ſee thee here, beyond my thoughts,
Beyond my hopes.

ORE. The gods have ſent me to thee;
They bad me come.

ELE. Indeed! more grateful ſtill
Is thy return; if by the gods' command
Thou cam'ſt, the gods will ſure protect thee here.

ORE. I would not damp thy joys, and yet I fear
Leſt they ſhould carry thee too far.

ELE. O! no!
But after ſo long abſence, thus returned
To thy afflicted ſiſter; ſure thou wouldſt not——

ORE. Do what?

ELE. Thou wouldſt not grudge me the dear pleaſure
Of looking on thee.

ORE. No; nor ſuffer any
To rob thee of it.

ELE. Shall I then!

ORE. No doubt.

ELE. I hear that voice, my friends, I never thought
To hear again: ye know, when I received
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and ſad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form, which never was forgotten.

ORE. Spend not thy time in fruitleſs words, nor tell me
How Clytæmneſtra lives, nor how Ægiſthus
Hath laviſhed all our wealth; the preſent hour
Demands our ſtricteſt attention; tell me how,
Whether by fraud, or open force, our foes
May beſt be vanquiſhed; let no chearful ſmile

Betray

Betray thee to thy mother; ſeem to grieve
As thou wert wont; when we have done the deed,
Joy ſhall appear, and we will ſmile in ſafety.

ELE. Thy will is mine; not to myſelf I owe
My preſent bliſs, I have it all from thee,
From thee, my brother; nor ſhould aught perſuade me
To give Oreſtes e'en a moment's pain:
That were ungrateful to th' indulgent power,
Who thus hath ſmiled propitious. Know Ægiſthus
Has left the palace; Clytæmneſtra's there;
And for thy needleſs fears that I ſhould ſmile.
Or wear a chearful face, I never ſhall;
Hatred ſo ſtrong is rooted in my ſoul,
The ſight of them will make me ſad enough.
The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee,
And add to the deceit; for flow they muſt,
When I behold thee in one happy hour
Thus ſnatched from life, and thus to life reſtored.
I could not hope it; O! 'tis paſſing ſtrange!
If from the tomb our father ſhould ariſe,
And ſay, he lived, I think I ſhould believe him;
And, O! when thou art come ſo far, 'tis fit
I yield to thee in all, do thou direct
My every ſtep; but know, had I been left
Alone, e'en I would not have failed in all,
But conquered bravely, or as bravely fell.

ORE. No more. I hear the footſteps as of one
Coming this way.

ELE. Strangers, go in, and bear

Strangers go in, &c. Electra, informed that ſome one was coming towards them, changes her tone and manner, and addreſſes Oreſtes and Pylades as ſtrangers; what ſhe ſays, we may obſerve, is purpoſely ambiguous, as ſhe was apprehenſive of being overheard.

That which with joy they cannot but receive,
But which with joy they cannot long poſſeſs.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

GOV. Madneſs and folly thus to linger here!
Have ye no thought? is life not worth your care?
Do ye not know the dangers that ſurround you?
Had I not watched myſelf before the palace,
E'er ye had entered, all your ſecret plan
Had been diſcovered to our foes within;
Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy,
And lengthened converſe; 'tis not fitting now,
Go in; away, delays are dangerous
At ſuch an hour; our fate depends upon it.

ORE. May I with ſafety? is all well within?

GOV. None can ſuſpect you.

ORE. Spake you of my death,
As we determined?

GOV. Living as thou art,
They do account thee one among the dead.

ORE. And are they glad? what ſay they?

GOV. By and by,
We'll talk of that; let it ſuffice, that all
Is right within; and that which moſt they think ſo,
May prove moſt fatal to them.

ELE. [pointing to the Governor.] Who is this?

ORE. Do you not know?

ELE. I cannot recollect him.

ORE. Not know the man to whom you truſted me?
Under whoſe care——

ELE. When? how?

ORE. To Phocis ſent,
I 'ſcaped the tyrant.

ELE.

ELE. Can it then be he,
Among the faithleſs, only faithful found,
When our dear father fell?

ORE. It is the ſame.

ELE. [to Gov.] Deareſt of men, great guardian of our race,
Art thou then here? thou who haſt ſaved us both
From countleſs woes; ſwift were thy feet to bring
Glad tidings to me, and thy hand ſtretched forth
Its welcome ſuccour; but, O! why deceive me?
Why wouldſt thou kill me with thy dreadful tale,
E'en when thou had ſuch happineſs in ſtore!
Hail! father, hail! for I muſt call thee ſo,
Know, thou haſt been to me, in one ſhort day,
Both the moſt hated, and moſt loved, of men.

GOV. No more of that; we ſhall have time enough
To talk of it hereafter; let us go;
This is the hour; the queen is now alone,
And not a man within; if ye delay,
Expect to meet more formidable foes,
In wiſdom and in numbers far ſuperior.

ORE. We will not talk, my Pylades, but act:
Let us go in; but to the gods, who guard
This place, be firſt due adoration paid.

ELE. Hear, then, Apollo, great Lycæan, hear

Swift were thy feet, &c. The expreſſion in the original is remarkable, ἡδίστου ἔχων ποδῶν ὑπηρέτημα, dulciſſimum habens pedum miniſterium; not unlike that of the prophet Iſaiah, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth "glad tidings."

Hear, then, Apollo, &c. Electra's prayer is made before the altar of Apollo, which ſtood at the entrance of the palace, where Clytæmneſtra had paid her devotions in the former ſcene; this

Their humble prayer! O! hear Electra too,
Who with unſparing hand her choiceſt gifts
Hath never failed to lay before thy altars;
Accept the little all which now remains
For me to give, accept my humbleſt prayers,
My vows, my adorations; ſmile propitious
On all our councils! O! aſſiſt us now,
And ſhew mankind what puniſhment remains
For guilty mortals from offended heaven!

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Behold, he comes! the ſlaughter-breathing god,
Mars, ever thirſting for the murtherer's blood;
And ſee, the dogs of war are cloſe behind;
Nought can eſcape their all-devouring rage;
This did my conſcious heart long ſince preſage,
And the fair dream that ſtruck my raptured mind.

ANTISTROPHE.

gives an air of ſolemnity to the action, and leſſens the horror of the murther, by repreſenting it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven.

Behold, he comes, &c. This is the fourth intermede or ſong of the chorus, and is ſuppoſed to divide the fourth and the fifth acts; it is ſhorter, we may obſerve, than any of the reſt, probably ſo contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the Spectator, who is naturally eager to ſee the cataſtrophe; it is not therefore a time to amuſe him with poetry and deſcription, but to prepare him for the event; which is here done in a few words, finely adapted to that purpoſe.

The dogs of war, Κυνες αφυκτοι, gr. canes inevitabiles. Shakeſpear has exactly the ſame image, "Cry havock, and let ſlip "the dogs of war!"

See prologue to Henry the fifth,

ANTISTROPHE.

Th' avenger ſteals along, with ſilent feet,
And ſharpened ſword, to his paternal ſeat,
His injured father's wrongs to vindicate;
Concealed from all by Maia's fraudful ſon,
Who ſafe conducts him till the deed be done,
Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

O! my dear friends, they are about it now,
The deed is doing: but be ſtill.

Maia's fraudful ſon. Mercury was the god of fraud and treachery, and called δολιος, or the deceiver; to him therefore was attributed all ſecret ſchemes and expeditions, good or bad. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar aſſiſtance in this place, may likewiſe be accounted for from his relation to Myrtilus, who was ſlain by Pelops.

O! my dear friends, &c. To avoid the horror of a murther on the ſtage, which, however familiar to us, the antients conſidered as ſhocking and diſguſtful, Sophocles has contrived that it ſhall be done within the palace; but as Electra had received no commands from the oracle to revenge the death of Agamemnon, there would have been an indecency and impropriety in making her a witneſs or acceſſary to the murther: ſhe therefore leaves her brother to kill Clytæmneſtra, and comes out; which at the ſame time gives her an opportunity of watching the arrival of Ægiſthus, and preventing any interruption from him. The appearance of Electra on the ſtage in this place is abſolutely neceſſary, as without it no reaſon could be aſſigned for the return of Oreſtes; and thus the reſt of

CHO. What deed?
How? where?
ELE. She doth prepare the funeral banquet;
But they are not far from her.
CHO. Why then leave them?
ELE. To watch Ægiſthus, leſt he ſteal upon us,
And blaſt our purpoſe.
CLY. [behind the ſcenes.] O! I am betrayed!
My palace full of murtherers; not a friend
Left to protect me!
ELE. Some one cries within;
Did you not hear?
CHO. It is too horrible
For mortal ear; I tremble at the ſound.
CLY. [within] Ægiſthus, O! where art thou?
ELE. Hark! again
The voice, and louder.

CLY.

the buſineſs of the drama muſt have been tranſacted out of ſight of the audience, who would conſequently remain ſtrangers to the cataſtrophe.

The funeral banquet. The Greek λεβητα κοσμει, lebetem parat, alluding to the περιδειπνον, or funeral banquet, which was uſually ſpread on the tomb of the deceaſed by the neareſt relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytæmneſtra was already preparing for Oreſtes, whom ſhe ſuppoſed dead: but they, ſays ſhe, are not far from her; that is, they who are preparing one for her. The ſentence, we ſee, is purpoſely left unfiniſhed.

Some one cries within. Dacier puts theſe words into the mouth of one of the women that compoſe the chorus; becauſe (ſays he) Electra would never have ſaid "*ſome one* cries out," as ſhe knew it muſt be Clytæmneſtra. The reader may take his choice in regard to this alteration; I have left it as it ſtands in the original, being a matter of no great conſequence.

CLY. [within.] O! my child, my child;
Pity thy mother, pity her who bore thee.

ELE. Be thine the pity which thou ſhew'dſt to him,
And to his father.

CHO. O! unhappy kingdom!
O! wretched race! thy miſery is full;
This day will finiſh all.

CLY. [within.] O! I am wounded!

ELE. Another ſtroke. Another, if thou canſt.

CLY. [within.] Ah me! again!

O! unhappy kingdom! The chorus, though ſatisfied that Clytæmneſtra deſerved to die, and that this action of Oreſtes was commanded by the gods, are, notwithſtanding, ſhocked at the execution of it: they lament the preſent, and expreſs their fear of future miſeries, in the houſe of Pelops; it is impoſſible, in their opinion, that a family could ever proſper where a wife had killed her huſband, and a child murthered his mother. There is ſomething in this reflection ſtriking and pathetic.

Another ſtroke, &c. "Ce mot fait frémir," (ſays Brumoy) "theſe words make one ſhudder." Dacier is likewiſe of opinion, that all the art of the poet is inſufficient to reconcile us to the fierceneſs of Electra. We cannot (ſay theſe gentlemen) hear, without horror, a ſiſter exhorting her brother to murther her own mother; nature ſtarts at ſuch inhumanity: Oreſtes ſhould be revenged, but by ſome other hand. Theſe, and many other accuſations of the ſame kind, are brought againſt Sophocles, who ſtands indicted of cruelty by the French critics; their delicacy is, it ſeems, greatly ſhocked at what they call the atrocity of the action. I am, notwithſtanding, of opinion, that the more indulgent Engliſh reader will acquit the poet, when he conſiders the manners and character of the people before whom the play was repreſented. The murther of Clytæmneſtra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore looked on by the antients, however contrary to the dictates of na-

ELE. O! that Ægiſthus too
Groaned with thee now!

CHO. Then vengeance is compleat:
The dead ariſe, and ſhed their murtherers blood
In copious ſtreams.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELE. Behold them here; their hands
Dropping with gore; a pious ſacrifice
To the great god of war. How is't, Oreſtes?

ORE. 'Tis very well; all's well, if there be truth
In great Apollo's oracles, ſhe's dead.
Thou need'ſt not fear a cruel mother now.

CHO. No more; Ægiſthus comes.

ELE. Inſtant go in;
Do you not ſee him? joyful he returns.

CHO. Retire; thus far is right, go on, and proſper.

ORE. Fear not, we'll do it.

CHO. But immediately.

ORE. I'm gone.

[*Exeunt* Oreſtes, Pylades, and Gov.

ELE. For what remains here to be done,
Be it my care; I'll whiſper in his ear
A few ſoft flattering words, that he may ruſh
Unknowing, down precipitate, on ruin.

ÆGISTHUS,

ture, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itſelf, ſufficent to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; beſides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the ſtory of Clytæmneſtra, the perſons concerned in her death, and every circumſtance attending it, were too well known to the whole audience, to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.

ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGI Which of you knows aught of theſe Phocian gueſts,
Who come to tell us of Oreſtes' death?
You firſt I aſk, Electra, once ſo proud
And fierce of ſoul; it doth concern you moſt;
And therefore you, I think, can beſt inform me.

ELE. Yes, I can tell thee; is it poſſible
I ſhould not know it? what were not to know
A circumſtance of deareſt import to me.

ÆGI. Where are they, then?

ELE. Within.

ÆGI. And ſpake they truth?

ÆLE. They did; a truth, not proved by words alone,
But facts undoubted.

ÆGI. Shall we ſee him, then?

ÆLE. Aye, and a dreadful ſight it is to ſee.

ÆGI. Thou art not wont to give me ſo much joy;
Now I am glad indeed.

ÆLE. Glad mayſt thou be,
If aught there is in that can give thee joy.

ÆGI. Silence within, and let my palace gates
Be opened all; that Argos and Mycenæ
May ſend her millions forth to view the ſight;
And if there are who nouriſh idle hopes
That ſtill Oreſtes lives, behold him here,
And learn ſubmiſſion, nor inflame the croud

Againſt

Which of you knows, &c. Clytæmneſtra, we are to ſuppoſe, on receiving the news of Oreſtes' death, had ſent a meſſage to Ægiſthus, to acquaint him with it; he returns home therefore immediately, to inquire into the particulars.

Glad mayſt thou be. This ſpeech of Electra, as well as that which goes before it, is purpoſely ambiguous; Ægiſthus believes ſhe is talking of Oreſtes, whilſt ſhe ſpeaks of Clytæmneſtra.

Againſt their lawful ſovereign, leſt they feel
An angry monarch's heavieſt vengeance on them.
ELE. Already I have learned the taſk, and yield
To power ſuperior.

Scene opens and diſcovers the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA extended on a bier, and covered with a veil.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a croud of SPECTATORS from the city.

ÆGI. What a ſight is here!
O! Deity ſupreme! this could not be
But by thy will; and whether Nemeſis
Shall ſtill o'ertake me for my crime, I know not.
Take off the veil, that I may view him well;
He was by blood allied, and therefore claims
Our decent ſorrows.
ORE. Take it off thyſelf;
'Tis not my office; thee it beſt befits
To ſee and to lament.
ÆGI. And ſo it does;
And I will do it; ſend Clytæmneſtra hither.
[taking off the veil.

ORE.

This could not be. The Greek is ὁ πεπρωκος, which, literally tranſlated, anſwers exactly to our phraſe, "it did not *fall out.*"

'Tis not my office. All duties paid to the dead were performed by the neareſt relations; Oreſtes, as ſuppoſed to be a ſtranger, had no buſineſs with them; Ægiſthus, therefore, himſelf, takes off the veil, which greatly heightens the ſurprize and horror of the cataſtrophe.

ORE. She is before thee.

ÆGI. Ha! what do I ſee?

ORE. Why, what's the matter? what affrights thee ſo? Do you not ſee him?

ÆGI. In what dreadful ſnare
Am I then fallen?

ORE. Doſt thou not now behold
That thou art talking with the dead?

ÆGI. Alas!
Too well I ſee it, and thou art—Oreſtes.

ORE. So great a prophet thou, and gueſs ſo ill!

ÆGI.

She is before thee. Of all the cataſtrophes, antient or modern, which I remember to have met with, this of Electra appears to me infinitely the moſt intereſting, natural, and truly dramatic.—There cannot poſſibly be a ſpectacle more affecting than the ſcene before us; a tyrant, murtherer, and adulterer, is repreſented as exulting on the death of the only perſon in the world whom he had to fear, and whoſe dead body he expects to ſee before him; inſtead of this, on lifting up the veil, he is ſhocked, not with the corpſe of Oreſtes, but that of his own wife; he perceives at once that Clytæmneſtra is murthered, that Oreſtes is alive and cloſe to him, and that he has nothing to expect himſelf but immediate death: the ſudden change of fortune to all the perſons concerned, the ſurpriſe and deſpair of Ægiſthus, the joy and triumph in the countenances of Oreſtes and Electra, muſt altogether have exhibited a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael to execute: how it was acted on the Greek ſtage, we cannot pretend to determine; moſt probably with taſte and judgment. Let the Engliſh reader conceive thoſe inimitable actors, Quin, Garrick, and Cibber, in the parts of Ægiſthus, Oreſtes, and Electra, and from thence form to himſelf ſome idea of the effect which ſuch a cataſtrophe would have on a Britiſh audience.

So great a prophet, &c. This is a ſneer of Oreſtes, on his being diſcovered by Ægiſthus, who had the reputation of a prophet.

ÆGI. I know that I am loſt, undone for ever;
But let me ſpeak to thee.
ELE. Do not, Oreſtes;
No, not a word; what can a moment's ſpace
Profit a wretch like him, to death devoted?
Quick let him die, and caſt his carcaſe forth
To dogs and vultures; they will beſt perform
Fit obſequies for him; by this alone
We can be free and happy.
ORE. Get thee in;
This is no time for talk; thy life, thy life.
ÆGI. But why go in? if what thou mean'ſt to do
Be juſt, what need of darkneſs to conceal it?
Why not deſtroy me here?
ORE. It is not thine
Now to command: hence to the fatal place
Where our dear father fell, and periſh there.
ÆGI. This palace then is doomed to be the witneſs
Of all the preſent, all the future, woes
Of Pelops' hapleſs race.

ORE.

They will beſt perform, &c. Amongſt the Greeks, to be deprived of the rites of ſepulture, was accounted a puniſhment worſe than death itſelf. The original doth not mention dogs and vultures, but only ſays, let him be given ταφευσι, ſolis pollinctoribus vel libitinariis, to the only buriers (if we may uſe the expreſſion) that he deſerves.

Hence to the fatal place, &c. Ægiſthus muſt be ſlain on the very ſpot where he killed Agamemnon; this heightens the juſtice of the action, and at the ſame time prevents the ſpilling of blood on the ſtage, which Sophocles judiciouſly avoids. The juſtice of Oreſtes puts us in mind of a ſimilar paſſage in holy writ: "In "the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, ſhall dogs "lick thy blood, even thine." See 1 Kings, xxi. 19.

ORE. Of thine, at leaſt,
It ſhall be witneſs; that's my prophecy,
And a moſt true one.
ÆGI. 'Tis not from thy father.
ORE. Thou talk'ſt, and time is loſt. Away.
ÆGI. I follow.
ORE. Thou ſhalt go firſt.
ÆGI. Think'ſt thou I mean to fly?
ORE. No; but I'd make thy end moſt bitter to thee
In every circumſtance, nor let thee chooſe
The ſofteſt means. Were all like thee to periſh
Who violate the laws, 'twould leſſen much
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

O! race of Atreus! after all thy woes,
How art thou thus, by one adventurous deed,
To freedom and to happineſs reſtored!

Of thine at leaſt, &c. The antients were of opinion, that the words of dying men were always prophetic; Ægiſthus, therefore, perceiving that his death was determined, foretels the fate of Oreſtes, doomed to be tormented for the murther of his mother; Oreſtes interrupts his ſpeech, by aſſuring him that his own fate was unavoidable: the Engliſh reader will recollect a parallel paſſage in Shakeſpear, where Richard the third cuts off the prophecies of Henry the ſixth, with

Die, prophet, in thy ſpeech;
For this, among the reſt, was I ordained.

FINIS.

PHILOCTETES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ULYSSES, king of ITHACA.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ſon of ACHILLES.

PHILOCTETES, ſon of PÆAN, and companion of HERCULES.

A SPY.

HERCULES.

CHORUS,
Compoſed of the companions of ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

SCENE LEMNOS, near a grotto, in a rock by the ſea-ſide.

PHILOCTETES.

ACT I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, ATTENDANT.

ULYSSES.

AT length, my noble friend, thou braveſt ſon
Of a brave father, father of us all,
The great Achilles, we have reached the ſhore
Of ſea-girt Lemnos, deſart and forlorn,
Where never tread of human ſtep is ſeen,
Or voice of mortal heard, ſave his alone,
Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched ſon,

Poor Philoctetes, &c. It is reported of Philoctetes, that Hercules, at his death on mount Hyllus, bequeathed to him, as a teſtimony of his eſteem, his bow and arrows; the extraordinary virtues of which, we ſhall find frequently alluded to in this piece. Philoctetes, after this, being in ſearch of an altar dedicated to his deceaſed friend, in the iſland of Chryſa, was there bit by a ſerpent; the wound feſtered, and an incurable ulcer enſued; notwithſtanding which he proceeded in his voyage to aſſiſt at the ſiege of Troy; where the wound growing deſperate, his continual cries and groans interrupted the motions of the war, and probably diſheartened the ſoldiers; the Græcian chiefs therefore thought it adviſable to remove him from the army. A ſuperſtitious belief was inſtilled into the multitude, that Philoctetes was ſtruck by the hand of the gods with an incurable diſtemper; and Ulyſſes was ordered to carry him to Lemnos, an uninhabited iſland in the Ægean ſea, and leave him there to the care of Providence. In this miſerable ſituation he remained for ten years; the Greeks, in the mean time, are informed by an oracle, that Troy could never be conquered without the arrows of Hercules,

Whom here I left; for ſuch were my commands
From Grecia's chiefs, when by his fatal wound
Oppreſt, his groans and execrations dreadful
Alarmed our hoſts, our ſacred rites profaned,
And interrupted holy ſacrifice.
But why ſhould I repeat the tale? the time
Admits not of delay; we muſt not linger,
Leſt he diſcover our arrival here,
And all our purpoſed fraud to draw him hence
Be ineffectual; lend me then thy aid:
Surveying round thee, canſt thou ſee a rock
With double entrance; to the ſun's warm rays
In winter open, and in ſummer's heat
Giving free paſſage to the welcome breeze?
A little to the left, there is a fountain
Of living water, where, if yet he breathes,
He ſlakes his thirſt; if aught thou ſeeſt of this,
Inform me: ſo ſhall each to each impart

Council

then in the poſſeſſion of Philoctetes. Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus are diſpatched with commands to bring him to the ſiege. The manner in which this expedition was conducted, and the means made uſe of by the artful Ulyſſes to gain the arrows of Hercules, conſtitute the ſubject of the tragedy; which, though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and diveſted of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the ſame time in ſuch amiable ſimplicity, ſuch ſtrength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may, perhaps, render it even more pleaſing to the judicious and claſſical reader, than thoſe plays of Sophocles, where the fable is apparently more intereſting, and the manners much more ſimilar to our own. The celebrated archbiſhop of Cambray was ſo ſtruck with the ſtory of Philoctetes, that he has taken the pains to weave it into his excellent work, where it forms a very beautiful epiſode. See Telemaque, b. 15.

Council moſt fit, and ſerve our common cauſe.

NEO. [leaving Ulyſſes a little behind him.]
If I miſtake not, I behold a cave,
E'en ſuch as thou deſcribeſt.

ULY. Doſt thou? which way?

NEO. Yonder it is; but no path leading thither,
Or trace of human footſtep.

ULY. In his cell
A chance but he hath laid him down to reſt;
Look if he hath not.

NEO. [advancing towards the cave.] Not a creature there.

ULY. Nor food, nor mark of houſhold preparation?

NEO. A ruſtic bed of ſcattered leaves.

UEY. What more?

NEO. A wooden bowl, the work of ſome rude hand,
With a few ſticks for fuel.

ULY. This is all
His little treaſure here.

NEO. Unhappy man!
Some linen for his wounds.

ULY. This muſt be, then,
His place of habitation; far from hence
He cannot roam; diſtempered as he is,
It were impoſſible; he is but gone
A little way, for needful food, or herb
Of power, to ſwage and mitigate his pain,
Wherefore diſpatch this ſervant to ſome place
Of obſervation, whence he may eſpy
His every motion, leſt he ruſh upon us:
There's not a Græcian whom his ſoul ſo much
Could wiſh to cruſh beneath him as Ulyſſes.

[Makes a ſignal to the attendant, who retires.]

NEO. He's gone to guard each avenue; and now,

If thou haſt aught of moment to impart,
Touching our purpoſe, ſay it; I attend.

ULY. Son of Achilles, mark me well; remember,
What we are doing not on ſtrength alone,
Or courage, but on conduct, will depend;
Therefore if aught uncommon be propoſed,
Strange to thy ears, or adverſe to thy nature,
Reflect that 'tis thy duty to comply,
And act conjunctive with me.

NEO. Well! what is it?

ULY. We muſt deceive this Philoctetes; that
Will be thy taſk; when he ſhall aſk thee who
And what thou art, Achilles' ſon, reply;
Thus far within the verge of truth, no more;
Add, that reſentment fired thee to forſake
The Græcian fleet, and ſeek thy native ſoil,
Unkindly uſed by thoſe who long with vows
Had ſought thy aid to humble haughty Troy,
And when thou cam'ſt, ungrateful as they were,
The arms of great Achilles, thy juſt right,
Gave to Ulyſſes; here thy bitter taunts
And ſharp invectives liberally beſtow
On me; ſay what thou wilt, I ſhall forgive,
And Greece will not forgive thee if thou doſt not;
For againſt Troy thy efforts are all vain
Without his arrows: ſafely thou mayſt hold
Friendſhip

The arms of great Achilles. The conteſt concerning the arms of Achilles, was ſolely between Ajax and Ulyſſes; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid claim to them. As Philoctetes, however, had been abſent during the whole affair, Ulyſſes was at liberty to ſubſtitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, eſpecially as his being the ſon of Achilles, naturally juſtified his pretenſions to the arms of his father; the fiction therefore was probable.

Friendſhip and converſe with him, but I cannot:
Thou wert not with us when the war began,
Nor bound by ſolemn oath to join our hoſt,
As I was; me he knows, and if he find
That I am with thee, we are both undone.
They muſt be ours, then, theſe all-conquering arms;
Remember that. I know, thy noble nature
Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud;
But what a glorious prize is victory!
Therefore be bold; we will be juſt hereafter.
Give to deceit and me a little portion
Of one ſhort day, and for thy future life
Be called the holieſt, worthieſt, beſt of men.

NEO. What but to hear alarms my conſcious ſoul,
Son of Laertes, I ſhall never practiſe:

Theſe all-conquering arms. A diſpute concerning a bow and arrows may probably ſeem to a modern critic but an unpromiſing ſubject for a tragedy; but the defenders of Sophocles muſt deſire him to recollect, that on thoſe arrows, however unintereſting the circumſtance may at firſt appear, depended no leſs than the fate of a whole nation; politically conſidered, therefore, it was a point of the utmoſt conſequence; if the poet had not thought ſo, he would certainly have been inexcuſable in bringing down a deity at laſt, as we ſhall ſee in the cataſtrophe, to determine it.

We will be juſt hereafter. This advice is put with great propriety into the mouth of the artful Ulyſſes, who, like other ſubtle panders to vice, perſuades his friend to the commiſſion of a crime, and at the ſame time propoſes the palliative of future repentance and virtue; an evaſive and ſubtle excuſe for guilt, which has perhaps done more injury to the cauſe of religion and truth, than any other whatſoever. Neoptolemus anſwers it with all the honeſt indignation that ſuch a ſentiment deſerved. The characters, we may obſerve, of the two heroes are finely contraſted, and ſerve, like light and ſhade, greatly to animate and enliven the whole beautiful picture.

I was not born to flatter or betray;
Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports)
Who gave me birth; what open arms can do,
Behold me prompt to act, but ne'er to fraud
Will I deſcend: ſure we can more than match
In ſtrength a foe thus lame and impotent:
I came to be a helpmate to thee, not
A baſe betrayer; and, O! king, believe me,
Rather, much rather, would I fall by virtue,
Than riſe by guilt to certain victory.

ULY. O! noble youth, and worthy of thy ſire,
When I like thee was young, like thee of ſtrength
And courage boaſtful, little did I deem
Of human policy; but long experience
Hath taught me, ſon, 'tis not the powerful arm,
But ſoft enchanting tongue, that governs all.

NEO. And thou wouldſt have me tell an odious falſehood?

ULY. He muſt be gained by fraud.

NEO. By fraud? and why
Not by perſuaſion?

ULY. He'll not liſten to it:
And force were vainer ſtill.

NEO. What mighty power
Hath he to boaſt;

ULY. His arrows, winged with death
Inevitable.

NEO. Then it were not ſafe
E'en to approach him.

ULY. No; unleſs by fraud
He be ſecured.

NEO. And think'ſt thou, 'tis not baſe
To tell a lie, then? ULY.

Think'ſt thou, 'tis not baſe, &c. The character of Neoptolemus is copied from that of his father, who is repreſented by Homer as of

ULY. Not if on that lie
Depends our ſafety.
NEO. Who ſhall dare to tell it,
Without a bluſh?
ULY. We need not bluſh at aught
That may promote our intereſt and ſucceſs.
NEO. But where's the intereſt that ſhould bias me?
Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught
To Neoptolemus?
ULY. Troy cannot fall
Without his arrows.
NEO. Saidſt thou not, that I
Was deſtined to deſtroy her?
ULY. Without him
Nought canſt thou do, and they without thee nothing.
NEO. Then I muſt have them.
ULY. When thou haſt, remember
A double prize awaits thee.

NEO.

an open and ingenuous diſpoſition, and a foe to lying and diſſimulation; in the ninth book of the Iliad, he cries out,

Εχθρος γαρ μοι κεινος ομως αϊδαο πυλησιν,
Ος δ' ετερον μεν κευθει ενι φρεσιν, αλλο δε βαζει.

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My heart deteſts him as the gates of hell. POPE.

words that deſerve, though from a heathen writer, to be written in letters of gold, and graven, as Solomon ſays, in the tablets of the heart.

Then I muſt have them. The ſtruggle between ambition and virtue in the breaſt of Neoptolemus, is natural and affecting. The ſubtle Ulyſſes had diſcovered that his foible was the love of glory, and therefore attacks him in the only part where he was open to perſuaſion. The virtue of Neoptolemus ſtaggers at the reward propoſed, and he ſubmits to a treachery which his ſoul abhors.

NEO. What, Ulyſſes?

ULY. The glorious names of valiant and of wiſe.

NEO. Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or ſhame
No more appal me.

ULY. Wilt thou do it, then?
Wilt thou remember what I told thee of?

NEO. Depend on't; I have promiſed; that's ſufficient.

ULY. Here, then, remain thou; I muſt not be ſeen;
If thou ſtay long, I'll ſend a faithful ſpy,
Who, in a ſailor's habit well diſguiſed,
May paſs unknown; of him, from time to time,
What beſt may ſuit our purpoſe thou ſhalt know:
I'll to the ſhip; farewell; and may the god
Who brought us here, the fraudful Mercury,
And great Minerva, guardian of our country,
And ever kind to me, protect us ſtill!

[*Exit* Ulyſſes.]

CHO. Maſter, inſtruct us, ſtrangers as we are
What we may utter, what we muſt conceal:
Doubtleſs

The fraudful Mercury. See note in Electra, p. 117.

Maſter, inſtruct us, &c. According to the original deſign of the chorus, their chief buſineſs was to take the part of diſtreſſed virtue; to counteract the bad effects that might ariſe from vicious characters, and to draw moral inferences from the action of the drama: they are generally therefore, as in the two preceding plays of Ajax and Electra, attendants on, and friends to the hero or heroine of the piece; a propriety which the ſubject of the tragedy before us would by no means admit, the diſtreſs of Philoctetes ariſing in a great meaſure from his being left alone in the iſland; the chorus, for this reaſon, is compoſed not of the friends of the hero, but the ſoldiers and followers of Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus; we muſt not be ſurprized, therefore, to find them conſpiring with their maſters to deceive Philoctetes, and throughout the play aiding and

Doubtleſs the man we ſeek, will entertain
Suſpicion of us; how are we to act?
To thoſe, alone, belong the art to rule,
Who bear the ſcepter from the hand of Jove;
To thee, of right, devolves the power ſupreme,
From thy great anceſtors delivered down;
Speak, then, our royal lord, and we obey.

NEO. If you would penetrate yon deep receſs,
To ſee the cave where Philoctetes lies,
Go forward; but remember to return
When the poor wanderer comes this way, prepared
To aid our purpoſe here, if need require.

CHO. O! king, we ever meant to fix our eyes
On thee, and wait attentive to thy will;
But, tell us, in what part is he concealed?
'Tis fit we know the place, leſt unobſerved
He ruſh upon us; which way doth it lie?
Seeſt thou his footſteps leading from the cave,
Or hither bent?

NEO. [advancing towards the cave.] Behold the double [door
Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.

CHO. And whither is its wretched maſter gone?

NEO. Doubtleſs in ſearch, of food, and not far off;
For ſuch his manner is; accuſtomed here,
So fame reports, to pierce with winged arrows
His ſavage prey for daily ſuſtenance,
His wound ſtill painful, and no hope of cure.

CHO.

aſſiſting the deſigns of their commanders; they, notwithſtanding, perform the officium virile preſcribed by Horace, and expreſs their pity and concern for the man, whom it is not in their power to relieve.

CHO. Alas! I pity him; without a friend,
Without a fellow-ſufferer, left alone,
Deprived of all the mutual joys that flow
From ſweet ſociety, deſtempered too;
How can he bear it? O! unhappy race
Of mortal man! doomed to an endleſs round
Of ſorrows, and immeaſurable woe!
Second to none in fair nobility
Was Philoctetes, of illuſtrious race;
Yet here he lies, from every human aid
Far off removed, in dreadful ſolitude,
And mingles with the wild and ſavage herd;
With them in famine and in miſery
Conſumes his days, and weeps their common fate,
Unheeded, ſave when babbling echo mourns,
In bittereſt notes, reſponſive to his woe.

NEO. And yet I wonder not; for if aright
I judge, from angry heaven the ſentence came;

And

Alas! I pity him, &c. The lamentation of the chorus in this ſcene, as it ſtands in the original, is in Strophe and Antiſtrophe, and was therefore, moſt probably, as I have before obſerved, ſet to muſic and ſung; but as it makes at the ſame time part of their converſation with Neoptolemus, I could not throw it into ode or rhyme without interrupting the narration, and giving a motley appearance to the dialogue; I have therefore left it in blank verſe. The deſcription of Philoctetes' diſtreſs, in this paſſage, is, in the Greek, inimitably beautiful, which I have endeavoured to give my readers ſome imperfect idea of, in the tranſlation.

From angry heaven, &c. The ſtory of Philoctetes, as related in the fifteenth book of Telemaque, differs from that of Sophocles in this particular; Philoctetes there informs Telemachus, that he dropped by chance one of the arrows of Hercules on his own foot, and that the wound remained for a long time incurable. He like-

And Chryſa was the cruel ſource of all;
Nor doth this ſad diſeaſe inflict him ſtill
Incurable, without aſſenting gods;
For ſo they have decreed, leſt Troy ſhould fall
Beneath his arrows, e'er th' appointed time
Of its deſtruction come.

CHO. No more, my ſon.

NEO. What ſay'ſt thou?

CHO. Sure I heard a diſmal groan
Of ſome afflicted wretch.

NEO. Which way?

CHO. E'en now
I hear it, and the ſound as of ſome ſtep
Slow-moving this way, he is not far from us;
His plaints are louder now; prepare, my ſon.

NEO. For what?

CHO. New troubles; for behold he comes;
Not like the ſhepherd with his rural pipe
And chearful ſong, but groaning heavily;
Either his wounded foot againſt ſome thorn
Hath ſtruck, and pains him ſorely, or perchance
He hath eſpied from far ſome ſhip attempting
To enter this inhoſpitable port,
And hence his cries to ſave it from deſtruction.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

wiſe attributes this misfortune, and all the diſtreſs which he ſuffered at Lemnos, to his crime in diſcovering to Ulyſſes the place where Hercules died, and which he had ſolemnly ſworn to conceal. The gods therefore puniſhed him for his perjury.

Not like the Shepherd, &c. Otway has caught this image in his Orphan.

"Sweet as the ſhepherd's pipe upon the mountain."

ACT II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SAY, welcome ſtrangers, what diſaſtrous fate
Led you to this inhoſpitable ſhore,
Nor heaven ſafe, nor habitation fit,
Affording ever? of what clime, what race?
Who are ye? ſpeak; if I may truſt that garb,
Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
My much-loved country; let me hear the ſound
Of your long-wiſhed-for voices; do not look
With horror, on me, but in kind compaſſion
Pity a wretch deſerted and forlorn
In this ſad place: O! if ye come as friends,
Speak, then, and anſwer, hold ſome converſe with me,
For this, at leaſt, from man to man is due.

NEO.

Say, welcome ſtrangers, &c. The abſurdity of dividing the Greek tragedies into five acts, which is perpetually recurring to us, appears remarkably evident in this place. Brumoy was obliged to make this the beginning of the ſecond act, though it is apparent the ſtage is not empty. Philoctetes enters to Neoptolemus and the Chorus whilſt they are talking of him. There was, however, no other method of dividing the play, without making the firſt act three times as long as any of the reſt; I have, therefore, followed this diviſion merely for a pauſe to the Engliſh reader.

Do not look, &c. Philoctetes, we may naturally imagine, after ten years ſtay on an uninhabited iſland, made but an uncouth and ſavage appearance; this addreſs to the chorus, therefore, who are ſhocked at his figure, is extremely natural, as is indeed almoſt every thing which Sophocles puts into the mouths of every character in the drama.

NEO. Know, ſtranger, firſt, what moſt thou ſeem'ſt to wiſh;
We are of Greece.

PHI. O! happineſs to hear!
After ſo many years of dreadful ſilence,
How welcome was that ſound! O! tell me, ſon,
What chance, what purpoſe, who conducted thee?
What brought thee hither, what propitious gale?
Who art thou? tell me all; inform me quickly.

NEO. Native of Scyros, thither I return;
My name is Neoptolemus, the ſon
Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

PHI. Dear is thy country, and thy father dear
To me, thou darling of old Lycomede;
But tell me in what fleet, and whence thou cam'ſt?

NEO. From Troy.

PHI. From Troy? I think thou wert not with us
When firſt our fleet ſailed forth.

NEO. Wert thou then there?
Or know'ſt thou aught of that great enterprize?

PHI. Know you not, then, the man whom you behold?

NEO. How ſhould I know whom I had never ſeen.

PHI. Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?
Hath my ſad ſtory never reached your ear?

NEO. Never.

PHI. Alas! how hateful to the gods,
How very poor a wretch muſt I be, then,

That

Native of Scyros, &c. Scyros was an iſland in the Ægean ſea, of which Lycomedes was king: hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war, and falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughter, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwiſe called Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him "the darling of old Lycomede."

That Greece ſhould never hear of woes like mine!
But they who ſent me hither, they concealed them,
And ſmile triumphant, whilſt my cruel wounds
Grow deeper ſtill. O! ſprung from great Achilles,
Behold before thee Pæan's wretched ſon,
With whom, a chance but thou haſt heard, remain
The dreadful arrows of renowned Alcides,
E'en the unhappy Philoctetes, him
Whom the Atridæ, and the vile Ulyſſes,
Inhuman left, diſtempered as I was
By the envenomed ſerpent's deep-felt wound;
Soon as they ſaw, that, with long toil oppreſt,
Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock,
There did they leave me, when from Chryſa's ſhore
They bent their fatal courſe; a little food,
And theſe few rags, were all they would beſtow:
Such one day be their fate! Alas! my ſon,
How dreadful, think'ſt thou, was that waking to me,
When from my ſleep I roſe, and ſaw them not!
How did I weep! and mourn my wretched ſtate!
When not a ſhip remained of all the fleet
That brought me here; no kind companion left
To miniſter or needful food or balm

To

How did I weep, &c. The character of Meliſander in the Agamemnon of Thompſon, is a cloſe imitation of Philoctetes. Our excellent deſcriptive poet has there transfuſed the ſpirit of Sophocles, and painted the miſeries of ſolitude in the warmeſt colours. Thompſon even improves on the paſſage before us in the following lines, which are ſo beautiful that I cannot help tranſcribing them:

Caſt on the wildeſt of the Cyclad iſles,
Where never human foot had marked the ſhore,
Theſe ruffians left me—yet, believe me, Arcas,

To my ſad wounds! on every ſide I looked,
And nothing ſaw but woe; of that indeed
Meaſure too full; for day ſucceeded day,
And ſtill no comfort came; myſelf alone
Could to myſelf the means of life afford,
In this poor grotto; on my bow I lived:
The winged dove, which my ſharp arrow ſlew,
With pain I brought into my little hut,
And feaſted there; then from the broken ice
I ſlaked my thirſt, or crept into the wood
For uſeful fuel; from the ſtricken flint
I drew the latent ſpark, that warms me ſtill,
And ſtill revives: this, with my humble roof,
Preſerve me, ſon; but, O! my wounds remain!
Thou ſeeſt an iſland deſolate and waſte;
No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt,
Nor hoſt to welcome in the traveller;
Few ſeek the wild, inhoſpitable ſhore.

By

Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
All ruffians as they were, I never heard
A ſound ſo diſmal as their parting oars.
See Thomp. Agam. act 3.

The ſentiment in the two laſt lines is remarkably natural and pathetic; but I refer my readers to the play itſelf, which abounds in many fine imitations of the antient tragedy.

The winged dove, &c.

Herbs were my food, thoſe bleſſed ſtores of health;
Only, when winter from my daily ſearch
Withdrew my verdant meal, I was obliged
In faithleſs ſnares to ſeize, which truly grieved me,
My ſylvan friends, that ne'er till then had known,
And therefore dreaded leſs, the tyrant man.
See Thompſon's Agamemnon.

By adverſe winds, ſometimes the unwilling gueſts,
As well thou mayſt ſuppoſe, were hither driven;
But when they came, they only pitied me,
Gave me a little food, or better garb
To ſhield me from the cold; in vain I prayed
That they would bear me to my native ſoil,
For none would liſten: here for ten long years
Have I remained, whilſt miſery and famine
Keep freſh my wounds, and double my misfortune.
This have the Atridæ and Ulyſſes done,
And may the gods with equal woes repay them!

CHO. O! ſon of Pæan, well might thoſe, who came
And ſaw thee thus, in kind compaſſion, weep;
I too muſt pity thee—I can no more.

NEO. I can bear witneſs to thee, for I know
By ſad experience what th' Atridæ are,
And what Ulyſſes.

PHI. Haſt thou ſuffered, then?
And doſt thou hate them too?

NEO. O! that theſe hands
Could vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ, then,
And Sparta, ſhould confeſs, that Scyros boaſts
Of ſons as brave and valiant as their own.

PHI. O! noble youth! but wherefore cam'ſt thou hither?
Whence this reſentment?

NEO. I will tell the all,
If I can bear to tell it: know, then, ſoon
As great Achilles died——

PHI. ——O! ſtay, my ſon,
Is then Achilles dead?

NEO.

Mycenæ then, and Sparta, &c. Two cities of Peloponneſus. Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menelaus, the former of whom was king of Mycenæ, and the latter of Sparta.

NEO. He is, and not
By mortal hand, but by Apollo's ſhaft
Fell glorious.

PHI. O! moſt worthy of each other,
The ſlayer and the ſlain! permit me, ſon,
To mourn his fate, ere I attend to thine.

[He weeps.]

NEO. Alas! thou need'ſt not weep for other's woes,
Thou haſt enough already of thy own.

PHI. 'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale.

NEO. Thus, then, it was. Soon as Achilles died,
Phœnix, the guardian of his tender years,
Inſtant ſailed forth, and ſought me out at Scyros;
With him the wary chief, Ulyſſes, came;
They told me then (or true or falſe I know not)
My father dead, by me, and me alone,
Proud Troy muſt fall; I yielded to their prayers;
I hoped to ſee at leaſt the dear remains
Of him, whom living I had long in vain
Wiſhed to behold; ſafe at Sigeum's port
Soon we arrived; in crouds the numerous hoſt
Thronged to embrace me, called the gods to witneſs,
In me once more they ſaw their loved Achilles
To life reſtored; but he, alas! was gone.
I ſhed the duteous tear, then ſought my friends,
Th' Atridæ (friends I thought 'em) claimed the arms
Of my dead father, and what elſe remained
His late poſſeſſion, when, O! cruel words!
And wretched I to hear them! thus they anſwered!

By apollo's ſhaft. Homer, and after him Virgil, makes Phœbus aſſiſt Paris in the death of Achilles, by wounding him with an arrow in the heel, the only part of him that was vulnerable.

Phœnix, &c. See Homer, book 9.

" Son of Achilles, thou in vain demand'ſt
" Thoſe arms already to Ulyſſes given;
" The reſt be thine:" I wept; and is it thus,
Indignant, I replied, ye dare to give
My right away? Know, boy, Ulyſſes cried,
That right was mine, and therefore they beſtowed
The boon on me, me who preſerved the arms
And him who bore them too. With anger fired
At this proud ſpeech, I threatened all that rage
Could dictate to me, if he not returned them.
Stung with my words, yet calm, he anſwered me;
Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place
Where thou ſhouldſt not have been; and ſince thou mean'ſt
To brave us thus, know, thou ſhalt never bear,
Thoſe arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis reſolved.
Thus injured, thus deprived, of all I held
Moſt precious, by the worſt of men, I left
The hateful place, and ſeek my native ſoil;
Nor do I blame ſo much the proud Ulyſſes,
As his baſe maſters: army, city, all
Depend on thoſe who rule: when men grow vile,
The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked.
I've told thee all; and him who hates th' Atridæ,
I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

CHORUS.

And him who bore them. Ulyſſes was reported to have taken away the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle, to the Græcian camp. Ovid mentions this in his account of the conteſt,

His humeris, his inquam humeris, ego corpus Achillis
Et ſimul arma tuli. Metamorphoſis, book 13.

CHORUS. STROPHE.

O! earth; thou mother of great Jove,
Embracing all with univerſal love,
Author benign of every good,
Through whom Pactolus rolls his golden flood;
To thee, whom in thy rapid car
Fierce lions draw, I roſe and made my prayer,
To thee I made my ſorrows known,
When from Achilles' injured ſon
Th' Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day
When proud Ulyſſes bore his arms away.

PHI. I wonder not, my friend, to ſee you here,
And I believe the tale; for well I know
The men who wronged you, know the baſe Ulyſſes;
Falſehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and nought
That's juſt or good can be expected from him?
But ſtrange it is to me, that, Ajax preſent,
He dare attempt it.

NEO. Ajax is no more;
Had he been living, I had ne'er been ſpoiled
Thus of my right.

PHI. Is he then dead?

NEO. He is.

O! earth, &c. This is an occaſional ſong of the chorus, which is very ſhort, conſiſting only of a ſtrophe of thirteen lines in the original, we ſhall find the antiſtrophe at a conſiderable diſtance from it, breaking the dialogue in a manner very uncommon.

Embracing all, &c. The earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea and Veſta, called the mother of the gods, was worſhipped in Phrygia and Lybia, where the river Pactolus is ſaid to have enriched Crœſus with its ſands. Cybele is repreſented by the poets as drawn by lions.

PHI. Alas! the ſon of Tydeus, and that ſlave,
Sold by his father Siſyphus, they live,
Unworthy as they are.

NEO. Alas! they do,
And flouriſh ſtill.

PHI. My old and worthy friend,
The Pylian ſage, how is he? he could ſee
Their arts, and would have given them better counſels.

NEO. Weighed down with grief he lives, but, moſt unhappy,
Weeps his loſt ſon, his dear Antilochus.

PHI. O! double woe! whom I could moſt have wiſhed
To live, and to be happy, thoſe to periſh!
Ulyſſes to ſurvive! it ſhould not be.

NEO. O! 'tis a ſubtle foe; but deepeſt plans
May ſometimes fail.

PHI.

Son of Tydeus. Diomede.

Sold by his father, &c. It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Laertes after her marriage with Siſyphus, and when ſhe was with child of Ulyſſes, for which Siſyphus, the firſt huſband, received a ſum of money; Ulyſſes, therefore, was often reproached with being the ſon of Siſyphus. See a note on Ajax, p. 10.

The Pylian ſage. Neſtor, king of Pylos. Agamemnon had ſuch an opinion of his wiſdom, that Homer makes him ſay, if he had ten ſuch counſellors, Troy would ſoon fall before him.

Weeps his laſt ſon. Antilochus was ſlain by Memnon in the Trojan war. See Homer's Od. b. 4.

O! 'tis a ſubtle foe. The original is

Σοφος παλαισης κεινος. αλλα χαὶ σοφαι
Γνωμαι, φιλοκτητ', εμποδιζονται θαλα.

which Brumoy tranſlates thus, 'Antiloque êtoit brave, mais la 'valieur eſt ſouvent mal recompenſée,' 'Antilochus was brave, 'but valour is often ill-rewarded.' The ſenſe of this paſſage, ſays he, is doubtful, but it certainly alludes to Antilochus. With all due deference to Mr. Brumoy's judgment, I cannot help thinking

PHI. Where was Patroclus then,
Thy father's deareſt friend?
NEO. He too was dead.
In war, alas! ſo fate ordains it ever,
The coward 'ſcapes, the brave and virtuous fall.
PHI. It is too true; and now thou talk'ſt of cowards,
Where is that worthleſs wretch, of readieſt tongue,
Subtle and voluble?
NEO. Ulyſſes?
PHI. No;
Therſites; ever talking, never heard,
NEO. I have not ſeen him, but I hear he lives.
PHI. I did not doubt it: evil never dies;
The gods take care of that: if aught there be
Fraudful and vile, 'tis ſafe; the good and juſt
Periſh unpitied by them; wherefore is it?
When gods do ill, why ſhould we worſhip them?
NEO. Since thus it is, ſince virtue is oppreſt,
And vice triumphant, who deſerve to live

that he is here miſtaken. Philoctetes had juſt obſerved that Ulyſſes ſtill lived; and Neoptolemus immediately anſwers, 'O! 'he is a ſubtle foe" Σοφος παλαισης, 'a cunning wreſtler.' Sophocles muſt certainly mean Ulyſſes, for how can Σοφος (according to Brumoy's tranſlation) ſignify brave, or Σοφαι γνωμαι be interpreted valour! Thompſon had apparently this very paſſage in his eye, when he makes Meliſander ſay,

"Malice often over-ſhoots itſelf."

Therſites. For the character of Therſites, ſee Homer's Iliad, b. 2.

Since thus it is, &c. Addiſon had probably this paſſage in view, when he makes his Cato ſay,

"When vice prevails, and impious men bear ſway,
"The poſt of honour is a private ſtation."

Are doomed to periſh, and the guilty reign;
Henceforth, O! ſon of Pæan, far from Troy
And the Atridæ will I live remote.
I would not ſee the man I cannot love.
My barren Scyros ſhall afford me refuge,
And home-felt joys delight my future days.
So fare thee well, and may th' indulgent gods
Heal thy ſad wound, and grant thee every wiſh
Thy ſoul can form! once more, farewell. I go,
The firſt propitious gale.

PHI. What! now, my ſon?
So ſoon?

NEO. Immediately; the time demands
We ſhould be near, and ready to depart.

PHI. Now, by the memory of thy honoured ſire,
By thy loved mother, by whate'er remains
On earth moſt dear to thee, O! hear me now,
Thy ſuppliant; do not, do not thus forſake me,
Alone, oppreſt, deſerted, as thou ſeeſt,
In this ſad place; I ſhall, I know I muſt, be
A burthen to thee; but, O! bear it kindly,
For ever doth the noble mind abhor
Th' ungenerous deed, and loves humanity;
Diſgrace attends thee if thou doſt forſake me,
If not, immortal fame rewards thy goodneſs.
Thou mayſt convey me ſafe to Œta's ſhores,
In one ſhort day; I'll trouble you no longer;
Hide me in any part where I may leaſt
Moleſt you. Hear me; by the guardian god
Of the poor ſuppliant, all-protecting Jove,
I beg,

Hide me in any part. The original ſays, "throw me into the "ſink, foredeck, or ſtern;" there was no neceſſity of ſpecifying theſe in the tranſlation.

I beg, behold me at thy feet, infirm,
And wretched as I am, I claſp thy knees;
Leave me not here, then, where there is no mark
Of human footſtep; take me to thy home,
Or to Eubœa's port, to Œta, thence
Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks
Of Sperchius' gentle ſtream, to meet my father,
If yet he lives; for, O! I begged him oft,
By thoſe who hither came, to fetch me hence.
Or he is dead, or they, neglectful, bent
Their haſty courſe to their own native ſoil.
Be thou my better guide; pity and ſave
The poor and wretched. Think, my ſon, how frail
And full of danger is the ſtate of man,
Now proſperous, now adverſe; who feels no ills
Should therefore fear them; and when fortune ſmiles
Be doubly cautious, leſt deſtruction come
Remorſeleſs on him, and he fall unpitied.

CHO. O! pity him, my lord, for bittereſt woes
And trials moſt ſevere he hath recounted;

To Eubœa's port, &c. Eubœa was a large iſland in the Ægean ſea, now called Negropont. Œta, a mountain in Theſſaly, now called Bunina.

When fortune ſmiles, &c. This is almoſt literally tranſlated, and the exact ſenſe of the original. Brumoy has added, "c'eſt "alors qu'il eſt beau de ſecourir les malheureux;" "this is the "time when it moſt becomes us to ſuccour the unhappy;" a ſentiment not improper in the mouth of Philoctetes, but which is not in Sophocles.

O! pity him, &c. This, in the original, is the antiſtrophe to the little ſong of the chorus, which I took notice of page 147. The reaſon why I have not put it in the ſame meaſure as the other is ſufficiently obvious.

Far be ſuch ſad diſtreſs from thoſe I love!
O! if thou hat'ſt the baſe Atridæ, now
Revenge thee on them, ſerve their deadlieſt foe;
Bear the poor ſuppliant to his native ſoil;
So ſhalt thou bleſs thy friend, and 'ſcape the wrath
Of the juſt gods, who ſtill protect the wretched.

NEO. Your proffered kindneſs, friends, may coſt you dear;
When you ſhall feel his dreadful malady
Oppreſs you ſore you will repent it.

CHO. Never.
Shall that reproach be ours.

NEO. In generous pity
Of the afflicted thus to be o'ercome
Were moſt diſgraceful to me; he ſhall go.
May the kind gods ſpeed our departure hence,
And guide our veſſels to the wiſhed-for ſhore!

PHI. O! happy hour! O! kindeſt, beſt of men!
And you, my deareſt friends! how ſhall I thank you?
What ſhall I do to ſhew my grateful heart?
Let us be gone; but, O! permit me firſt
To take a laſt farewell of my poor hut,
Where I ſo long have lived; perhaps you'll ſay
I muſt have had a noble mind to bear it;
The very ſight, to any eyes but mine,
Were horrible; but ſad neceſſity
At length prevailed, and made it pleaſing to me.

CHO.

The wiſhed for ſhore. In the original, "the place which we "wiſh to ſail to." The expreſſion, we ſee, is purpoſely ambiguous; Neoptolemus means Troy, and Philoctetes underſtands it as ſpoken of Scyros, his native country.

My poor hut. The Greek is οἰκον ἀοικησιν, 'my uninhabi-'table habitation;' this would not bear a literal tranſlation.

CHO. One from our ſhip, my lord, and with him comes
A ſtranger; ſtop a moment, till we hear
Their buſineſs with us.

Enter a SPY, in the habit of a merchant, with another Græcian.

SPY. Son of great Achilles,
Know, chance alone hath brought me hither, driven
By adverſe winds to where thy veſſels lay
As home I ſailed from Troy; there did I meet
This my companion, who informed me where
Thou mightſt be found: hence, to purſue my courſe,
And not to tell thee what concerns thee near,
Had been ungenerous; thou, perhaps, meantime,
Of Greece, and of her counſels, nought ſuſpecting,
Counſels againſt thee not by threats alone,
Or words enforced, but now in execution.

NEO. Now by my virtue, ſtranger, for thy news
I am much bound to thee, and will repay
Thy ſervice; tell me what the Greeks have done.

SPY. A fleet already ſails to fetch thee back,
Conducted by old Phœnix, and the ſons
Of valiant Theſeus

NEO.

Son of great Achilles, &c. This ſpy is probably the ſame perſon who made his appearance in the firſt act, and was ſent out to watch for Philoctetes. Ulyſſes ſends him back in the diſguiſe of a merchant, to carry on the plot, and haſten as much as poſſible the departure of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Ulyſſes had already deſired Neoptolemus to frame his anſwers according to the hints given him by the ſpy, and to act in concert with him; Neoptolemus, therefore, purpoſely turns the diſcourſe to Ulyſſes, to give the ſpy an opportunity of mentioning his deſign on Philoctetes. He blends truth and falſhood, we ſee, together as artfully as poſſible which prevents the leaſt ſuſpicion of fraud or treachery.

The ſons of Theſeus. Acamas and Demophoon.

NEO. Come they then to force me?
Or am I to be won by their perſuaſion?
SPY. I know not that; you have what I could learn.
NEO. And did th' Atridæ ſend them?
SPY. Sent they are,
And will be with you ſoon.
NEO. But wherefore, then,
Came not Ulyſſes? did his courage fail?
SPY. He, e'er I left the camp, with Diomede,
On ſome important embaſſy ſailed forth,
In ſearch——
NEO. Of whom?
SPY. There was a man——but, ſtay,
Who is thy friend here, tell me, but ſpeak ſoftly.
[whiſpering him.]
NEO. The famous Philoctetes.
SPY. Ha! begone then,
Aſk me no more; away immediately.
PHI. What do theſe dark, myſterious whiſpers mean?
Concern they me, my ſon?
NEO. I know not what
He means to ſay; but I would have him ſpeak
Boldly before us all, whate'er it be.
SPY. Do not betray me to the Græcian hoſt,
Nor make me ſpeak what I would fain conceal;
I am but poor; they have befriended me.
NEO. In me thou ſeeſt an enemy confeſt
To the Atridæ; this is my beſt friend,
Becauſe he hates them too; if thou art mine,
Hide nothing then.
SPY. Conſider firſt.
NEO. I have.
SPY. The blame will be on you.

NEO.

NEO. Why, let it be;
But ſpeak, I charge thee.
SPY. Since I muſt, then; know,
In ſolemn league combined, the bold Ulyſſes,
And gallant Diomede, have ſworn, by force,
Or by perſuaſion, to bring back thy friend:
The Græcians heard Laertes's ſon declare
His purpoſe, far more reſolute he ſeemed
Than Diomede, and ſurer of ſucceſs.
NEO. But why th' Atridæ, after ſo long time,
Again ſhould wiſh to ſee this wretched exile,
Whence this deſire? came it from th' angry gods
To puniſh thus their inhumanity?
SPY. I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece
Of late you have not heard: there was a prophet,
Son of old Priam, Helenus by name,
Him in his midnight walks, the wily chief,
Ulyſſes, curſe of every tongue, eſpied;
Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks
A welcome ſpoil; much he foretold to all,
And added laſt, that Troy ſhould never fall
Till Philoctetes from this iſle returned;
Ulyſſes heard, and inſtant promiſe gave
To fetch him hence; he hoped by gentle means
To gain him; thoſe ſucceſsleſs, force at laſt
Could but compel him; he would go, he cried,
And if he failed, his head ſhould pay the forfeit.
I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone
Thou and thy friend, if thou wouldſt wiſh to ſave him.
PHI. And does the traitor think he can perſuade me?
As well might he perſuade me to return
From death to life, as his baſe father did.

SPY.

His father. Siſyphus (imagined by many to be the father of)

SPY. Of that I know not: I muſt to my ſhip;
Farewell; and may the gods protect you both!

[Exit.]

PHI. Lead me, expoſe me to the Græcian hoſt!
And could the inſolent Ulyſſes hope
With his ſoft flatteries e'er to conquer me?
No; ſooner would I liſten to the voice
Of that fell ſerpent, whoſe envenomed tongue
Hath lamed me thus; but what is there he dare not
Or ſay or do? I know he will be here
E'en now, depend on't; therefore, let's away;
Quick let the ſea divide us from Ulyſſes;
Let us be gone; for well-timed expedition,
The taſk performed, brings ſafety and repoſe.

NEO. Soon as the wind permits us, we embark,
But now 'tis adverſe.

PHI. Every wind is fair,
When we are flying from misfortune.

NEO. True;
And 'tis againſt them too.

PHI. Alas! no ſtorms
Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prey.

NEO.

Ulyſſes) concerning whom a ſuperſtitious report prevailed, that having on his death-bed deſired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complained to Pluto of her cruelty, in not performing the funeral obſequies, and was by him permitted, on promiſe of immediate return, to reviſit this world, in order to puniſh her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compelled by Mercury. It is neceſſary to the underſtanding of Sophocles, that the Engliſh reader ſhould be familiar with, and reconciled to, all theſe abſurdities contained in the mythology and religion of the Greeks.

NEO. I'm ready; take what may be neceſſary,
And follow me.
PHI. I want not much.
NEO. Perhaps
My ſhip will furniſh you.
PHI. There is a plant
Which to my wound gives ſome relief; I muſt
Have that.
NEO. Is there aught elſe?
PHI. Alas! my bow,
I had forgot; I muſt not loſe that treaſure.
[Philoctetes ſteps towards his grotto, and brings out his bow and arrows.]
NEO. Are theſe the famous arrows, then?
PHI. They are.
NEO. And may I be permitted to behold,
To touch, to pay my adoration to them?
PHI. In theſe, my ſon, in every thing that's mine,
Thou haſt a right.
NEO. But if it be a crime,
I would not; otherwiſe——
PHI. O! thou art full
Of piety; in thee it is no crime;
In thee, my friend, by whom alone I look
Once more with pleaſure on the radiant ſun;
By whom I live; who giv'ſt me to return
To my dear father, to my friends, my country.
Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more
I riſe to triumph o'er them, by thy aid;
Behold them, touch them, but return them to me,
And boaſt that virtue which on thee alone
Beſtowed ſuch honour; virtue made them mine;
I can deny thee nothing: he whoſe heart

Is grateful, can alone deſerve the name
Of friend, to every treaſure far ſuperior.

NEO. Go in.

PHI. Come with me; for my painful wound
Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward. [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Since proud Ixion, doomed to feel
The tortures of th' eternal wheel,
Bound by the hand of angry Jove,
Received the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was diſtreſs ſo deep, or woe ſo great,
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who ever with the juſt and good,
Guiltleſs of fraud and rapine ſtood,
And the fair paths of virtue ſtill purſued;
Alone on this inhoſpitable ſhore,
Where waves for ever beat, and tempeſts roar,
How could he e'er or hope or comfort know,
Or painful life ſupport, beneath ſuch weight of woe!

ANTISTROPHE.

Expoſed to the inclement ſkies,
Deſerted and forlorn he lies;

No

See proud Ixion, &c. The ſtory of Ixion, here alluded to is generally known; to the few who are unacquainted with it, it may be ſufficient to obſerve, that Ixion was in love with Juno; and for boaſting of that ſucceſs in his amour which he never met with was thrown by Jupiter into hell; where, being placed on a wheel encompaſſed with ſerpents, he was turned round without ceaſing.

This ſong of the chorus, agreeably to the precepts of Horace, ariſes immediately from the ſubject, being a pathetic lamentation over Philoctetes; whoſe diſtreſſes are painted in the warmeſt colours, and deſcribed in all the elegance of antient ſimplicity.

No friend or fellow-mourner there,
To ſooth his ſorrows, and divide his care;
Or ſeek the healing plant, of power to 'ſwage
His aching wound, and mitigate its rage;
But if perchance, a while releaſed
From torturing pain, he ſinks to reſt,
Awakened ſoon, and by ſharp hunger preſt,
Compelled to wander forth in ſearch of food,
He crawls in anguiſh to the neighbouring wood;
E'en as the tottering infant in deſpair,
Who mourns an abſent mother's kind ſupporting care.

STROPHE II.

The teeming earth, which mortals ſtill ſupplies
With every good, to him her ſeed denies;
A ſtranger to the joy that flows
From the kind aid which man on man beſtows;
Nor food, alas! to him was given,
Save when his arrows pierced the birds of heaven;
Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl,
For ten long years relieve his chearleſs ſoul;
But glad was he his eager thirſt to ſlake
In the unwholſome pool, or ever-ſtagnant lake.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed;
A fairer fate, and brighter days ſucceed:
For he at laſt hath found a friend
Of nobleſt race, to ſave and to defend, To

Hath found a friend, &c. Brumoy obſerves, on this paſſage, that the chorus, being ſtrongly attached to the intereſt of their maſter, Neoptolemus, are but the echos of his expreſſions, and though they could not therefore be ignorant of his deſign to carry Philoctetes to Troy, inſtead of his native country, they here mention the latter as his real intention, which they muſt be ſuppoſed to do from the fear of being over-heard by Philoctetes, whoſe cave was cloſe to them.

To guide him with protecting hand,
And ſafe reſtore him to his native land;
On Sperchius' flowery banks to join the throng
Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral ſong
On Œta's top, which ſaw Alcides riſe,
And from the flaming pile aſcend his native ſkies.

ACT III.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

COME, Philoctetes; why thus ſilent? wherefore
This ſudden terror on thee?

PHI. Oh!

NEO. Whence is it?

PHI. Nothing; my ſon, go on.

NEO.

On Sperchius' banks. Sperchius was a river in Theſſaly.

Melian nymphs. Melos was an iſland near Candy, reckoned among the Cyclades, and now called Milo.

Nothing; my ſon. The pains which Philoctetes felt from his wound, are deſcribed as periodical, returning at certain ſeaſons, and attended with violent agonies and convulſions, which generally terminated in a profuſe diſcharge of matter; the pain then ceaſing, the fatigue occaſioned by it brought on a gentle ſlumber, which relieved him. Philoctetes, feeling the ſymptoms of his diſtemper approaching, endeavours as much as poſſible to conceal his anguiſh, being apprehenſive that his cries and groans might induce Neoptolemus, in ſpite of his promiſe, to leave him behind; he makes ſlight of it, therefore, till quite overpowered by continual torture, he acknowledges himſelf, at laſt, unable to ſtir. This circumſtance, we may obſerve, is artfully thrown in by the poet, to ſtop the effect of Ulyſſes' ſtratagem, which was juſt on the point of execution, and which, if ſucceeded, muſt of courſe have put an end to the drama; this accident intervening gives a

NEO. Is it thy wound
That pains thee thus?
PHI. No; I am better now:
Oh! gods!
NEO. Why doſt thou call thus on the gods?
PHI. To ſmile propitious, and preſerve us——Oh!
NEO. Thou art in miſery. Tell me; wilt thou not?
What is it?
PHI. O! my ſon, I can no longer
Conceal it from thee. O! I die, I periſh!
By the great gods let me implore thee, now
This moment, if thou haſt a ſword, O! ſtrike,
Cut off this painful limb, and end my being.
NEO. What can this mean, that unexpected thus
It ſhould torment thee?
PHI. Know you not, my ſon?
NEO. What is the cauſe?
PHI. Can you not gueſs it?
NEO. No.
PHI. Nor I.
NEO. That's ſtranger ſtill.
PHI. My ſon, my ſon!
NEO. This new attack is terrible indeed!
PHI. 'Tis inexpreſſible! have pity on me!
NEO. What ſhall I do?
PHI. Do not be terrified,
And leave me: its returns are regular,
And like the traveller, when its appetite
Is ſatisfied, it will depart. Oh! oh!

new turn to the whole, ſerves to introduce the remorſe and repentance of Neoptolemus, gives Ulyſſes an opportunity of appearing, and brings about the cataſtrophe.

NEO. Thou art oppreſt with ills on every ſide,
Give me thy hand; come, wilt thou lean upon me?
PHI. No; but theſe arrows, take, preſerve 'em for me
A little while, till I grow better: ſleep
Is coming on me, and my pains will ceaſe.
Let me be quiet; if, mean time, our foes
Surpriſe thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious truſt
I have repoſed in thee; that were ruin
To thee, and to thy friend.
NEO. Be not afraid,
No hands but mine ſhall touch them; give them to me.
PHI. Receive them, ſon; and let it be thy prayer
They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides.
[Gives him the bow and arrows.
NEO. May the Gods
Forbid it ever; may they guide our courſe
And ſpeed our proſperous ſails!
PHI. Alas! my ſon,
I fear thy vows are vain; behold my blood
Flows from the wound; O! how it pains me! now,
It comes, it haſtens; do not, do not leave me;
O! that Ulyſſes felt this racking torture,
E'en to his inmoſt ſoul! again it comes,
O? Agamemnon, Menelaus, why
Should not you bear theſe pangs as I have done?
O! death, where art thou, death? ſo often called,
Wilt thou not liſten? wilt thou never come?
Take thou the Lemnian fire, my generous friend,

Do

The Lemnian fire. Alluding, moſt probably, to the generally received opinion, that the forges of Vulcan were in the iſland of Lemnos.

Do me the ſame kind office which I did
For my Alcides; theſe are thy reward;
He gave them to me, thou alone deſerv'ſt
The great inheritance. What ſays my friend?
What ſays my dear preſerver? O! where art thou?

NEO. I mourn thy hapleſs fate.

PHI. Be of good chear,
Quick my diſorder comes, and goes as ſoon;
I only beg thee not to leave me here.

NEO. Depend on't I will ſtay.

PHI. Wilt thou indeed?

NEO. Truſt me, I will.

PHI. I need not bind thee to it
By oath.

NEO. O! no; 'twere impious to forſake thee.

PHI. Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith.

NEO. I do.

PHI. Thither, O! thither lead.
[pointing up to heaven.

NEO. What ſay'ſt thou? where?

The ſame kind office. Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his laſt moments, and ſet fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of mount Œta.

Give me thy hand. Amongſt the Greeks, in all compacts and agreements, it was uſual to take each other by the hand, that being the manner of plighting faith; this was always conſidered by men of character as equally binding with the moſt ſolemn oath; Philoctetes, therefore, deſires no other aſſurance of the ſincerity of his friend. It is perhaps needleſs here to remark, that this cuſtom has been adopted by the moderns, and is practiſed in almoſt every nation to this day, though it does not amongſt us carry ſo much weight with it, being ſeldom made uſe of in matters of great importance.

PHI. Above.

NEO. What, loſt again? why look'ſt thou thus
On that bright circle?

PHI. Let me, let me go.

NEO. [lays hold of him.] Where wouldſt thou go?

PHI. Looſe me.

NEO. I will not.

PHI. Oh!
You'll kill me if you do not.

NEO. [lets him go.] There, then; now
Is thy mind better?

PHI. O! receive me, earth;
Receive a dying man; here muſt I lie;
For O! my pain's ſo great I cannot riſe.

[Philoctetes ſinks down on the earth near the entrance of the cave.]

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEO. Sleep hath o'erta'en him, ſee his head is lain
On the cold earth; the balmy ſweat thick drops
From every limb, and from the broken vein
Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his ſlumbers.

CHO. [INVOCATION TO SLEEP.]

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,
Great phyſician of the mind,
Who doſt nor pain nor ſorrow know,
Sweeteſt balm of every woe,

Mildeſt

Sleep, thou patron, &c. Philoctetes, quite faint from exceſs of pain, lays himſelf down on the earth, and ſinks into a ſhort ſlumber; the chorus, with great propriety, fill up the pauſe of action by an invocation to ſleep. In the original, this ſpeech of the chorus, and the next, are in ſtrophe, antiſtrophe, and epode; the reaſon why I have thrown only the firſt part into rhyme, muſt be obvious to the judicious reader.

Mildeſt ſovereign, hear us now;
Hear thy wretched ſuppliant's vow;
His eyes in gentle ſlumbers cloſe,
And continue his repoſe;
Hear thy wretched ſuppliant's vow,
Great phyſician, hear us now.

And now, my ſon, what beſt may ſuit thy purpoſe
Conſider well, and how we are to act;
What more can we expect? the time is come;
For better far is opportunity
Seized at the lucky hour, than all the counſels
Which wiſdom dictates or which craft inſpires.

NEO. He hears us not: but eaſy as it is
To gain the prize, it would avail us nothing
Were he not with us; Phœbus hath reſerved
For him alone the crown of victory;
But thus to boaſt of what we could not do,
And break our word, were moſt diſgraceful to us.

CHO. The gods will guide us, fear it not, my ſon;
But what thou ſay'ſt, ſpeak ſoft, for well thou know'ſt
The ſick man's ſleep is ſhort; he may awake
And hear us, therefore let us hide our purpoſe;
If then thou think'ſt as he does, thou know'ſt whom,
This is the hour; at ſuch a time, my ſon,
The wiſeſt err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes' ſleeps, void of all help;
Lame, impotent, unable to reſiſt,
He is as one among the dead; e'en now

Thou knowſt whom. The chorus means Ulyſſes, but is afraid to mention his name, leſt Philoctetes ſhould awake and hear it, which would at once diſcover the plot againſt him.

We'll take him with us; 'twere an eaſy taſk.
Leave it to me, my ſon; there is no danger.

NEO. No more; his eyes are open; ſee, he moves.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHI. [Awaking.] O! fair returning light! beyond my [hope?
You too my kind preſervers! O! my ſon,
I could not think you would have ſtaid ſo long
In kind compaſſion to thy friend; alas!
Th' Atridæ never would have acted thus;
But noble is thy nature, and thy birth,
And therefore little did my wretchedneſs,
Nor from my wounds the noiſome ſtench deter
Thy generous heart. I have a little reſpite;
Help me, my ſon; I'll try to riſe; this weakneſs
Will leave me ſoon, and then we'll go together.

NEO. I little thought to find thee thus reſtored.
Truſt me, I joy to ſee thee free from pain,
And hear thee ſpeak; the marks of death were on thee;
Raiſe thyſelf up; thy friends here, if thou wilt,
Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burthen to them
If we requeſt it.

PHI. No; thy hand alone;
I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough

If

O! fair, &c. Mr. Brumoy here begins his fourth act, which is certainly very abſurd, as there is not the leaſt pauſe of action, or vacancy of ſcene, Philoctetes awaking immediately after the laſt ſpeech of the chorus, who obſerved his eyes opening; beſides that, the third act is thus rendered moſt prepoſterouſly ſhort; though the French critic remarks, that it is, notwithſtanding, a complete act; "ſuivant l'idée des Grecs," "according to the idea of the Greeks." One may venture, however, to pronounce, that if the Greeks had divided their tragedies into acts, they would have done it with more judgment.

If they can bear with me and my diſtemper,
When we embark.

NEO. Well, be it ſo, but riſe.

[Philoctetes riſes.

PHI. O never fear; I'll riſe as well as ever.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

HOW ſhall I act?

PHI. What ſays my ſon?

I'll riſe as well as ever. The end of the third act (if an act there muſt be) may, I think, with greater propriety be placed here; as Philoctetes may be ſuppoſed to creep into his cave, to look for the plant which he mentioned, and Neoptolemus to go in with him, ſo that the ſtage would be left void. This act, even thus extended, is not half ſo long as the preceding; the diviſion, however, is better than Brumoy's.

How ſhall I act? Neoptolemus, who, as I before obſerved, is deſcribed to us as of an honeſt and ingenious diſpoſition, being deeply affected by the diſtreſs and anguiſh of Philoctetes, ſoftened at the ſame time by the confidence which this unhappy man had repoſed in him, and reflecting on the ſolemn contract he had juſt made, is ſtruck with horror, and remorſe at the thought of ſuch treachery and baſeneſs; he advances, in a penſive poſture, and ſpeaks to himſelf, without regarding Philoctetes, who is at a loſs to comprehend him, till at laſt he opens his heart, and confeſſes the deſign; this gives a new and ſudden turn to the plot, and prepares the neceſſary appearance of Ulyſſes. Thus does every circumſtance in this excellent tragedy ariſe naturally from that which goes before it, and all the various parts of the edifice contribute to the ſtrength, ſymmetry and beauty of the whole.

NEO. Alas!
I know not what to ſay; my doubtful mind——
PHI. Talked you of doubts? you did not ſurely.
NEO. Ay,
That's my misfortune.
PHI. Is then my diſtreſs
The cauſe at laſt you will not take me with you?
NEO. All is diſtreſs and miſery; when we act
Againſt our nature, and conſent to ill.
PHI. But ſure to help a good man in misfortunes
Is not againſt thy nature.
NEO. Men will call me
A villain; that diſtracts me.
PHI. Not for this,
For what thou mean'ſt to do, thou mayſt deſerve it.
NEO. What ſhall I do? direct me, Jove! To hide
What I ſhould ſpeak, and tell a baſe untruth,
Were double guilt.
PHI. He purpoſes at laſt,
I fear it much, to leave me.
NEO. Leave thee! No.
But how to make thee go with pleaſure hence
There I'm diſtreſt.
PHI. I underſtand thee not;
What means my ſon?
NEO. I can no longer hide
The dreadful ſecret from thee; thou art going
To Troy, e'en to the Greeks. to the Atridæ.
PHI. Alas! what ſay'ſt thou?
NEO. Do not weep, but hear me.
PHI. What muſt I hear? what wilt thou do with me?
NEO. Firſt, ſet thee free; then carry thee, my friend,
To conquer Troy.

PHI.

PHI. Is this indeed thy purpoſe?
NEO. This am I bound to do.
PHI. Then am I loſt,
Undone, betrayed; canſt thou, my friend, do this?
Give me my arms again.
NEO. It cannot be:
I muſt obey the powers who ſent me hither;
Juſtice injoins; the common cauſe demands it.
PHI. Thou worſt of men, thou vile artificer
Of fraud moſt infamous, what haſt thou done?
How have I been deceived? doſt thou not bluſh
To look upon me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring? baſe betrayer!
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,
The only means; give 'em, reſtore 'em to me;
Do not take all: alas! he hears me not,
Nor deigns to ſpeak, but caſts an angry look
That ſays, I never ſhall be free again
O! mountains, rivers, rocks, and ſavage herds!
To you I ſpeak, to you alone I now
Muſt breathe my ſorrows; you are wont to hear

My

Thou worſt of men. The original is ω πυρ συ which, according to the ſcholiaſt, was meant for a pun on the word Πυῤῥος Pyrrhus, the firſt and proper name of Neoptolemus. Brumoy tranſlates it, 'O! rage digne de ton nom.' I thought ſo poor a quibble might as well be omitted.

He hears me not. Neoptolemus, repenting of his perfidy and loſt in thought, is debating within himſelf, whether he ſhall reſtore the arrows to Philoctetes; he walks about, therefore, in great agitation of mind, and gives no attention to what is ſaid to him; this whole ſcene is full of action, and the variety of paſſions, expreſſed in the countenance and geſture of both, muſt have had a fine effect in the repreſentation.

My ſad complaints, and I will tell you all
That I have ſuffered from Achilles' ſon;
Who, bound by ſolemn oath to bear me hence
To my dear native ſoil, now ſails for Troy.
The perjured wretch firſt gave his plighted hand,
Then ſtole the ſacred arrows of my friend,
The ſon of Jove, the great Alcides; thoſe
He means to ſhew the Greeks, to ſnatch me hence,
And boaſt his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
This empty ſhade, were worthy of his arm;
Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus
Subdued me, and e'en now to fraud alone
He owes the conqueſt; I have been betrayed.
Give me my arms again, and be thyſelf
Once more; O! ſpeak; thou wilt not; then I'm loſt.
O! my poor hut! again I come to thee,
Naked and deſtitute of food, once more,
Receive me, here to die; for now, no longer
Shall my ſwift arrow reach the flying prey,
Or on the mountains pierce the wandering herd;
I ſhall myſelf afford a banquet now
To thoſe I uſed to feed on; they the hunters,
And I their eaſy prey; ſo ſhall the blood
Which I ſo oft have ſhed, be paid by mine;
And all this too from him whom once I deemed
Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill;
And yet I will not curſe thee, till I know
Whether thou ſtill retain'ſt thy horrid purpoſe,
Or doſt repent thee of it; if thou doſt not,
Deſtruction wait thee!

CHO. We attend your pleaſure,

My

We attend your pleaſure. Brumoy ſends off the chorus towards the ſea-ſhore immediately after the words, 'when we embark,'

My royal lord, we muſt be gone; determine
To leave, or take him with us.

NEO. His diſtreſs
Doth move me much; truſt me, I long have felt
Compaſſion for him.

PHI. O! then by the gods
Pity me now, my ſon, nor let mankind
Reproach thee for a fraud ſo baſe.

NEO. Alas!
What ſhall I do? would I were ſtill at Scyros!
For I am moſt unhappy,

PHI. O! my ſon,
Thou art not baſe by nature, but miſguided
By thoſe who are, to deeds unworthy of thee;
Turn then thy fraud on them who beſt deſerve it,
Reſtore my arms, and leave me.

NEO. Speak, my friends,
What's to be done?

Enter

p. 167, and brings them back again in this place, as ſent by Ulyſſes to know the reaſon of Neoptolemus's delay. This departure and return of the chorus, which is a mere conjecture of Brumoy's, is, I think, unneceſſary; beſides that it is not agreeable to the conduct generally obſerved by Sophocles, whoſe choruſes always continue on the ſtage, unleſs on ſome very important occaſion.

Speak, my friends. Neoptolemus, already reſolved to atone for his crime, by reſtoring the arrows, applies to the chorus for their opinion, which he knew would be in favour of Philoctetes. Ulyſſes, ſurpriſed at their unexpected delay, and impatient to be gone, leaves his ſhip, and, having overheard Neoptolemus, enters at this important juncture. His ſudden intruſion and haughty behaviour but ſerve to confirm Neoptolemus in his reſolution. Nothing can be better imagined, or conducted, than the plan of this excellent drama.

Enter ULYSSES.

ULY. Ha! doſt thou heſitate?
Traitor! be gone! give me the arms.
PHI. Ah me!
Ulyſſes here!
ULY. Ay! 'tis Ulyſſes' ſelf
That ſtands before thee.
PHI. Then I'm loſt, betrayed;
This was the cruel ſpoiler.
ULY. Doubt it not;
'Twas I, I do confeſs it.
PHI. [to Neoptolemus] O! my ſon,
Give me them back.
ULY. It muſt not be, with them
Thyſelf muſt go, or we ſhall drag thee hence.
PHI. And will they force me? O! thou daring villain!
ULY. They will, unleſs thou doſt conſent to go.
PHI. Wilt thou, O! Lemnos? wilt thou, mighty Vul-
With thy all-conquering fire, permit me thus [can!
To be torn from thee?
ULY. Know, great Jove himſelf
Doth here preſide; he hath decreed thy fate,
I but perform his will.
PHI. Deteſted wretch!
Mak'ſt thou the gods a cover for thy crime?
Do they teach falſhood?
ULY. No; they taught me truth;
And therefore hence; that way thy journey lies.
[Pointing to the ſea.]
PHI. It doth not.
ULY. But, I ſay, it muſt be ſo.
PHI. And Philoctetes, then was born a ſlave!
I did not know it.

ULY.

ULY. No, I mean to place thee
E'en with the nobleſt, e'en with thoſe by whom
Proud Troy muſt periſh.
PHI. Never will I go,
Befall what may, whilſt this deep cave is open
To bury all my ſorrows.
ULY. What wouldſt do?
PHI. Here throw me down, daſh out my deſperate brains
Againſt this rock, and ſprinkle it with my blood.
ULY. [to the chorus] Seize, and prevent him.
[They ſeize him.]
PHI. Manacled! O! hands,
How helpleſs are you now! thoſe arms, which once
Protected, thus torn from you! thou abandoned, [to Ulyſſes]
Thou ſhameleſs wretch! from whom nor truth nor juſtice,
Nought that becomes the generous mind, can flow,
How haſt thou uſed me! how betrayed! ſuborned
This ſtranger, this poor youth, who, worthier far
To be my friend than thine, was only here
Thy inſtrument; he knew not what he did,
And now, thou ſeeſt, repents him of the crime
Which brought ſuch guilt on him ſuch woes on me.
But thy foul ſoul, which from its dark receſs
Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art,
Unwilling as he was, inſtructed him,
And made him ſoon a maſter in deceit.
I am thy priſoner now; e'en now thou mean'ſt
To drag me hence, from this unhappy ſhore
Where firſt thy malice left me, a poor exile,
Deſerted

From its dark receſs, &c. The Greek is 'διὰ μυχοῦ ἔλεπτο', 'per latebras proſpiciens;' the expreſſion is remarkable, and the tranſlation therefore almoſt literal.

Deſerted, friendleſs, and, tho' living, dead
To all mankind; periſh the vile betrayer!
O! I have curſed thee often, but the gods
Will never hear the prayers of Philoctetes.
Life and its joys are thine; whilſt I, unhappy,
Am but the ſcorn of thee, and the Atridæ,
Thy haughty maſters; fraud and force compelled thee,
Or thou hadſt never ſailed with them to Troy.
I lent my willing aid; with ſeven brave ſhips
I ploughed the main to ſerve 'em; in return,
They caſt me forth, diſgraced me, left me here;
Thou ſay'ſt they did it; they impute the crime
To thee; and what will you do with me now?
And whither muſt I go? what end, what purpoſe,
Could urge thee to it? I am nothing, loſt
And dead already; wherefore, tell me wherefore;
Am I not ſtill the ſame deteſted burthen,
Loathſome and lame? Again muſt Philoctetes
Diſturb your holy rites? If I am with you,
How can you make libations? That was once
Your vile pretence for inhumanity.
O! may you periſh for the deed! The gods
Will grant it ſure, if juſtice be their care,
And that it is, I know. You had not left
Your native ſoil, to ſeek a wretch like me,
Had not ſome impulſe from the powers above,
Spite of yourſelves, ordained it! O! my country,

An

Fraud and force compelled thee. Ulyſſes, unwilling to go among the other chiefs to the ſiege of Troy, feigned himſelf mad; but being detected by Palamedes, was after all obliged to join them.

Am I not ſtill. This is mentioned in the firſt ſcene as the reaſon aſſigned for expoſing Philoctetes on the iſland; the ſarcaſm therefore is juſt and natural.

And you, O! gods! who look upon this deed,
Puniſh, in pity to me, puniſh all
The guilty band; could I behold them periſh,
My wounds were nothing; that would heal them all.

CHO. [to Ulyſſes] Obſerve, my Lord, what bitterneſs of ſoul
His words expreſs; he bends not to misfortune,
But ſeems to brave it.

ULY. I could anſwer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more
Than this—I act as beſt befits our purpoſe.
Where virtue, truth, and juſtice, are required,
Ulyſſes yields to none; I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet ſubmit to thee.
Let him remain. Thy arrows ſhall ſuffice;
We want thee not; Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myſelf with equal ſtrength,
Can aim the deadly ſhaft, with equal ſkill.
What could thy preſence do? let Lemnos keep thee.
Farewell! perhaps the honours, once deſigned
For thee, may be reſerved to grace Ulyſſes.

PHI. Alas! ſhall Greece then ſee my deadlieſt foe
Adorned with arms which I alone ſhould bear?

ULY. No more: I muſt be gone.

PHI. [to Neoptolemus] Son of Achilles,
Thou wilt not leave me too? I muſt not loſe
Thy converſe, thy aſſiſtance.

ULY. [to Neoptolemus] Look not on him;
Away, I charge thee; 'twould be fatal to us.

PHI. [to the chorus] Will you forſake me, friends, dwells no compaſſion
Within your breaſts for me?

CHO.

Teucer can draw thy bow. Teucer was accounted one of the beſt archers in the Grecian army, though Menelaus, we may remember, reproaches him for it. See note in Ajax, p. 46.

CHO. [pointing to Neoptolemus] He is our maſter;
We ſpeak and act but as his will directs.

NEO. I know he will upbraid me for this weakneſs,
But 'tis my nature, and I muſt conſent,
Since Philoctetes aſks it; ſtay you with him,
Till to the gods our pious prayers we offer,
And all things are prepared for our departure;
Perhaps, mean time, to better thoughts his mind
May turn relenting; we muſt go: remember,
When we ſhall call you, follow inſtantly.

[*Exit* with Ulyſſes.]

PHI. O! my poor hut! and is it then decreed
Again I come to thee to part no more,
To end my wretched days in this ſad cave,
The ſcene of all my woes? for whither now
Can I betake me? who will feed, ſupport,
Or cheriſh Philoctetes? not a hope
Remains for me. O! that th' impetuous ſtorms
Would bear me with them to ſome diſtant clime
For I muſt periſh here.

CHO. Unhappy man!
Thou haſt provoked thy fate; thyſelf alone
Art to thyſelf a foe, to ſcorn the good,
Which wiſdom bids thee take, and chuſe misfortune.

PHI.

O! my poor hut, &c. From this place, to the words 'O! ye 'have brought back once more, &c.' the Greek is all ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, ſet to muſic, and ſung alternately by Philoctetes and the chorus.

Th' impetuous ſtorms, &c. The Greek is πτωκαδις or πτωχαδες, which the ſcholiaſts interpret, harpies. Ratallerus and Brumoy, whom I have followed, render it, ſtorms, which is the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe.

PHI. Wretch that I am, to periſh here alone!
O! I ſhall ſee the face of man no more,
Nor ſhall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
And bring me ſuſtenance! ſuch vile deluſions
Uſed to betray me! O! that pains, like thoſe
I feel, might reach the author of my woes!

CHO. The gods decreed it; we are not to blame;
Heap not thy curſes, therefore, on the guiltleſs,
But take our friendſhip.

PHI. [pointing to the ſea-ſhore] I behold him there;
E'en now I ſee him laughing me to ſcorn,
On yonder ſhore, and in his hands the darts
He waves triumphant, which no arms but theſe
Had ever borne. O! my dear glorious treaſure!
Hadſt thou a mind to feel th' indignity,
How wouldſt thou grieve to change thy noble maſter,
The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch
So vile, ſo baſe, ſo impious as Ulyſſes!

CHO. Juſtice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
Nor from his lips, reproach and bitterneſs
Invidious flow; Ulyſſes, by the voice
Of Greece appointed, only ſought a friend
To join the common cauſe, and ſerve his country.

PHI. Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air,
And you, who on theſe mountains love to feed,
My ſavage prey, whom once I could purſue;
Fearful no more of Philoctetes, fly
This hollow rock, I cannot hurt you now;
You need not dread to enter here; alas!
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On theſe poor limbs, when I ſhall be no more.
Where can I hope for food? or who can breathe

The author of my woes. Ulyſſes.

This vital air, when life-preſerving earth
No longer will aſſiſt him?

CHO. By the gods
Let me entreat thee, if thou doſt regard
Our maſter, and thy friend, come to him now,
Whilſt thou mayſt 'ſcape this ſad calamity;
Who but thyſelf would chuſe to be unhappy
That could prevent it!

PHI. O! you have brought back
Once more the ſad remembrance of my griefs;
Why, why, my friends, would you afflict me thus?

CHO. Afflict thee, how?

PHI. Think you I'll e'er return
To hateful Troy?

CHO. We would adviſe thee to it.

PHI. I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.

CHO. That we ſhall
Moſt gladly; to the ſhips, my friends, away; [going]
Obey your orders.

PHI. [Stops them.] By protecting Jove,
Who hears the ſuppliant's prayer, do not forſake me.

CHO. [returning] Be calm then.

PHI. O! my friends! will you then ſtay?
Do, by the gods I beg you.

CHO. Why that groan?

PHI. Alas! I die! my wound, my wound! hereafter
What can I do? you will not leave me; hear——

CHO. What canſt thou ſay we do not know already?

PHI.

Life preſerving earth. The Greek is remarkably ſoft and elegant, Βιοδωρος αια.

My wound. The original is O! my foot, my foot, which the reader may ſubſtitute if he thinks proper.

PHI. O'erwhelmed by ſuch a ſtorm of griefs as I am,
You ſhould not thus reſent a madman's phrenzy.
CHO. Comply then, and be happy.
PHI. Never, never;
Be ſure of that; tho' thunder-bearing Jove
Should with his lightnings blaſt me, would I go;
No; let Troy periſh, periſh all the hoſt
Who ſent me here to die; but, O! my friends,
Grant me this laſt requeſt.
CHO. What is it? ſpeak.
PHI. A ſword, a dart, ſome inſtrument of death.
CHO. What wouldſt thou do?
PHI. I'd hack off every limb.
Death; my ſoul longs for death.
CHO. But wherefore is it?
PHI. I'll ſeek my father.
CHO. Whither?
PHI. In the tomb;
There he muſt be. O! Scyros, O! my country,
How could I bear to ſee thee as I am!
I who had left thy ſacred ſhores, to aid
The hateful ſons of Greece! O! miſery!
[Goes into the cave.]
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

ERE now we ſhould have ta'en thee to our ſhips,
But that advancing this way I behold

E'er now we ſhould, &c. The ſame impropriety, which ſtruck us on the opening of the fourth act, recurs with equal force at the

Ulyſſes, and with him Achilles' ſon.

ULY. Why this return? wherefore this haſte?

NEO. I come
To purge me of my crimes.

ULY. Indeed! what crimes?

NEO. My blind obedience to the Græcian hoſt,
And to thy counſels.

ULY. Haſt thou practiſed aught
Baſe, or unworthy of thee?

NEO. Yes, by art
And vile deceit betrayed th' unhappy.

ULY. Whom?
Alas! what mean you?

NEO. Nothing. But the ſon
Of Pæan——

ULY. Ha! what wouldſt thou do? my heart
Miſgives me. [Aſide.]

NEO. I have ta'en his arms, and now——

ULY. Thou wouldſt reſtore them! ſpeak! is that thy pur-
Almighty Jove! [poſe?

NEO.

beginning of this. The ſcene is not void, and conſequently no ſuch diviſion can take place. That of Brumoy is ſtill more abſurd, which takes in this ſpeech to the fourth act, as if it were poſſible that the chorus ſhould perceive their maſters Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus approaching, and immediately run off the ſtage: it is ſurely much better to make them go in with Philoctetes, and come out again ſpeaking to him, ſtill remaining in the cave.

Why this return, &c. Neoptolemus advances in haſte towards the cave of Philoctetes; Ulyſſes apprehenſive of his deſign, follows and expoſtulates with him.

Thou wouldſt reſtore them. The reſolution of Neoptolemus to reſtore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, diſcon-

NEO. Unjuſtly ſhould I keep
Another's right.
ULY. Now, by the gods, thou mean'ſt
To mock me; doſt thou not?
NEO. If to ſpeak truth
Be mockery.
ULY. And does Achilles' ſon
Say this to me?
NEO. Why force me to repeat
My words ſo often to thee?
ULY. Once to hear them,
Is once indeed too much.
NEO. Doubt then no more,
For I have told thee all.
ULY. There are, remember,
There are, who may prevent thee.
NEO. Who ſhall dare
To thwart my purpoſe?
ULY. All the Græcian hoſt,
And with them, I.
NEO. Wiſe as thou art, Ulyſſes,
Thou talk'ſt moſt idly.
ULY. Wiſdom is not thine,
Either in word or deed.
NEO. Know, to be juſt
Is better far than to be wiſe,
ULY. But where,
Where is the juſtice, thus unauthoriſed,
To give a treaſure back thou ow'ſt to me,
And to my counſels?

certs the meaſures of Ulyſſes, and awakens the attention of the ſpectator, who expects with eagerneſs the conſequence of it.

NEO. I have done a wrong,
And I will try to make atonement for it.
ULY. Doſt thou not fear the power of Greece?
NEO. I fear
Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.
ULY. 'Tis not with Troy, then, we contend, but thee.
NEO. I know not that.
ULY. Seeſt thou this hand? behold
It graſps my ſword.
NEO. Mine is alike prepared,
Nor ſeeks delay.
ULY. But I will let thee go;
Greece ſhall know all thy guilt, and ſhall revenge it.
[*Exit* Ulyſſes.
NEO. 'Twas well determined; always be as wiſe
As now thou art, and thou mayſt live in ſafety.
[Approaching towards the cave.
Ho! ſon of Pæan; Philoctetes, leave
Thy rocky habitation, and come forth.

PHI.

I will let thee go. Brumoy, whoſe notions of honour are perhaps a little too modern on the occaſion, is ſhocked at this appearance of cowardice in Ulyſſes, who after thus exaſperating Neoptolemus, inſtead of reſenting his cavalier treatment, very prudently retires, with a threat to tell the Græcians of his ill behaviour. The conduct of Sophocles in this particular is, notwithſtanding unexceptionable; for, however unavoidable a duel might have been on the French ſtage in ſuch a circumſtance, the antients did not ſee the neceſſity of it; their heroes, as we find in Homer, bore a great deal of bad language from each other without drawing their ſwords: It would therefore have been highly inconſiſtent with the character of the prudent Ulyſſes to have quarrelled and fought with his friend, and thus put an end at once to the whole ſcheme of his expedition.

PHI. [from the cave.] What noiſe was that? who calls
on Philoctetes? [He comes out.
Alas! what would you, ſtrangers? are you come
To heap freſh miſeries on me?
NEO. Be of comfort,
And hear the tidings which I bring.
PHI. I dare not;
Thy flattering tongue already hath betrayed me.
NEO. And is there, then, no room for penitence?
PHI. Such were thy words, when, ſeemingly ſincere,
Yet meaning ill, thou ſtol'ſt my arms away.
NEO. But now it is not ſo. I only came
To know if thou art reſolute to ſtay,
Or ſail with us.
PHI. No more of that; 'tis vain
And uſeleſs all.
NEO. Art thou, then, fixed?
PHI. I am;
It is impoſſible to ſay how firmly.
NEO. I thought I could have moved thee, but I've done.
PHI. 'Tis well thou haſt; thy labour had been vain;
For never could my ſoul eſteem the man
Who robbed me of my deareſt, beſt poſſeſſion,
And now would have me liſten to his counſels;
Unworthy offspring of the beſt of men!
Periſh th' Atridæ! periſh firſt Ulyſſes!
Periſh thyſelf!
NEO. Withhold thy imprecations,
And take thy arrows back.
PHI. A ſecond time
Wouldſt thou deceive me?
NEO. By th' almighty power
Of ſacred Jove, I ſwear.

PHI. O! joyful ſound!
If thou ſay'ſt truly.

NEO. Let my actions ſpeak:
Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again.

[Gives him the arrows.

Enter ULYSSES.

ULY. Witneſs, ye gods, here in the name of Greece,
And the Atridæ, I forbid it!

PHI. Ha!
What voice is that? Ulyſſes?

ULY. Ay, 'tis I,
I who perforce will carry thee to Troy
Spite of Achilles' ſon.

PHI. [raiſing his arm as intending to throw an arrow at Ulyſſes.] Not if I aim,
This ſhaft aright,

NEO.

Not if I aim, &c. Ulyſſes, ſtrongly oppoſing and proteſting againſt the reſtitution of the arrows, Philoctetes no ſooner regains them than, warm with reſentment, he aims an arrow at his breaſt, but is withheld by Neoptolemus. Mr. de Fenelon, in his Telemaque, has varied a little from Sophocles in this particular. He ſuppoſes Ulyſſes to have made a ſign to Neoptolemus to reſtore the arrows; and that Philoctetes notwithſtanding, in the heat of paſſion, drew the bow againſt his enemy, but was ſtopt by Neoptolemus. 'I was aſhamed of myſelf, ſays Philoctetes (ſee Tel. 'b. 15.) for thus uſing my arrows againſt him who had reſtored 'them to me, and at the ſame time could not bear the thought 'of being indebted for any thing to a man whom I ſo abhorred.' This, as Brumoy judiciouſly obſerves, is ſpirited, but not agreeable to the conduct of Sophocles; as the propriety of character is deſtroyed by making Ulyſſes conſent to the reſtoration of the arrows, and likewiſe by the ungenerous behaviour of Philoctetes in endeavouring to kill his benefactor.

NEO. [laying hold of him.] Now by the gods I beg thee,
Stop thy raſh hand.
PHI. Let go my arm.
NEO. I will not.
PHI. Shall I not ſlay my enemy?
NEO. O! no,
'Twould caſt diſhonour on us both.
PHI. Thou know'ſt,
Theſe Græcian chiefs are loud pretending boaſters,
Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field.
NEO. I know it; but remember, I reſtored
Thy arrows to thee, and thou haſt no cauſe
For rage, or for complaint againſt thy friend.
PHI. I own thy goodneſs; thou haſt ſhewn thyſelf
Worthy thy birth, no ſon of Siſyphus,
But of Achilles, who on earth preſerved
A fame unſpotted, and amongſt the dead
Still ſhines ſuperior, an illuſtrious ſhade.
NEO. Joyful I thank thee for a father's praiſe,
And for my own; but liſten to my words,
And mark me well; misfortunes, which the gods
Inflict on mortals, they perforce muſt bear,
But when oppreſſed by voluntary woes
They make themſelves unhappy, they deſerve not
Our pity or our pardon; ſuch art thou;
Thy ſavage ſoul, impatient of advice,
Rejects the wholeſome counſel of thy friend,
And treats him like a foe; but I will ſpeak,
Jove be my witneſs! therefore hear my words,

And

No ſon of Sophocles. See note, p. 148. The injuries he had received from Ulyſſes are always uppermoſt in his thoughts, and he takes every opportunity of ſhewing his reſentment of them.

And grave them in thy heart; the dire diſeaſe
Thou long haſt ſuffered is from angry heaven,
Which thus afflicts thee for thy raſh approach
To the fell ſerpent, which on Cryſa's ſhore
Watched o'er the ſacred treaſures; know, beſide,
That whilſt the ſun in yonder eaſt ſhall riſe,
Or in the weſt decline, diſtempered ſtill
Thou ever ſhalt remain, unleſs to Troy
Thy willing mind tranſport thee; there the ſons
Of Æſculapius ſhall reſtore thee; there,
By my aſſiſtance, ſhalt thou conquer Troy;
I know it well; for that prophetic ſage,
The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold
It ſhould be ſo; 'proud Troy, (he added then)
'This very year muſt fall, if not, my life
'Shall anſwer for the falſhood:' therefore yield;
Thus to be deemed the firſt of Græcians, thus
By Pæan's favourite ſons to be reſtored,
And thus marked out the conqueror of Troy,
Is ſure diſtinguiſhed happineſs.

PHI. O! life,
Deteſted, why wilt thou ſtill keep me here,
Why not diſmiſs me to the tomb? alas!
What can I do? how can I diſbelieve

My

On Chryſa's ſhore. See note, p. 129.

How can I diſbelieve, &c. Philoctetes, moved by the generoſity of Neoptolemus in reſtoring the arrows, is almoſt perſuaded to lay aſide his reſentment and ſail for Troy, but at the ſame time cannot bear the thought of joining Ulyſſes and the Atridæ; this doubt and uncertainty cauſes a new ſituation in the drama, which keeps up the attention of the audience. One cannot help obſerving with what a variety of intereſting circumſtances Sophocles has contrived to embelliſh a ſubject ſo ſimple as to appear at firſt ſight incapable of admitting any.

My generous friend? I muſt conſent, and yet
Can I do this, and look upon the ſun?
Can I behold my friends, will they forgive,
Will they aſſociate with me after this?
And you, ye heavenly orbs, that roll around me,
How will you bear to ſee me linked with thoſe
Who have deſtroyed me, e'en the ſons of Atreus,
E'en with Ulyſſes, ſource of all my woes?
My ſufferings paſt I could forget, but O!
I dread the woes to come, for well I know
When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
Unnumbered crimes, and ills to ills ſucceed.
It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
Shouldſt thus adviſe me, whom it ill becomes
To think of Troy; I rather had believed
Thou wouldſt have ſent me far, far off from thoſe
Who have defrauded thee of thy juſt right,
And gave thy arms away; are theſe the men
Whom thou wouldſt ſerve? whom thou wouldſt thus com-
To ſave and to defend? it muſt not be. [pel me
Remember, O! my ſon, the ſolemn oath
Thou gav'ſt to bear me to my native ſoil;
Do this, my friend, remain thyſelf at Scyros,
And leave theſe wretches to be wretched ſtill.
Thus ſhalt thou merit double thanks, from me,
And from my father; nor by ſuccour given
To vile betrayers prove thyſelf as vile.

NEO. Thou ſay'ſt moſt truly; yet confide in heaven,
Truſt to thy friend, and leave this hated place.

PHI. Leave it? For whom? for Troy and the Atridæ?
Theſe wounds forbid it.

NEO. They ſhall all be healed,
Where I will carry thee.

PHI.

PHI. An idle tale
Thou tell'ſt me, ſurely, doſt thou not?
NEO. I ſpeak
What beſt may ſerve us both.
PHI. But, ſpeaking thus,
Doſt thou not fear th' offended gods?
NEO. Why fear them?
Can I offend the gods by doing good?
PHI. What good? to whom? to me or to th' Atridæ?
NEO. I am thy friend, and therefore would perſuade thee.
PHI. And therefore give me to my foes.
NEO. Alas!
Let not misfortunes thus tranſport thy ſoul
To rage and bitterneſs.
PHI. Thou wouldſt deſtroy me.
NEO. Thou knowſt me not.
PHI. I know th' Atridæ well,
Who left me here.
NEO. They did; yet they, perhaps,
E'en they, O! Philoctetes may preſerve thee.
PHI. I never will to Troy.
NEO. What's to be done?
Since I can ne'er perſuade thee, I ſubmit;
Live on in miſery.
PHI. Then, let me ſuffer;
Suffer I muſt; but, O! perform thy promiſe;
Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home
Inſtant, my friend, nor ever call back Troy
To my remembrance; I have felt enough
From Troy already.
NEO. Let us go, prepare.
PHI. O! glorious ſound!
NEO. Bear thyſelf up.

PHI.

PHI. I will,
If poſſible.
NEO. But how ſhall I eſcape
The wrath of Greece.
PHI. O! think not of it.
NEO. What
If they ſhould waſte my kingdom?
PHI. I'll be there.
NEO. Alas! what canſt thou do?
PHI. And with theſe arrows
Of my Alcides——
NEO. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou?
PHI. Drive
Thy foes before me; not a Greek ſhall dare
Approach thy borders.
NEO. If thou wilt do this,
Salute the earth, and inſtant hence. Away.

HERCULES deſcends and ſpeaks.

Stay, ſon of Pæan; lo! to thee 'tis given
Once

Stay ſon of Pæan, &c. Hercules after a life ſpent in the laborious ſervice of virtue, was admitted into heaven by his father Jupiter, and ranked among the gods. Agreeably to his character whilſt upon earth, he leaves the regions of peace and happineſs only to ſerve his country and his friend. To juſtify the poet, with regard to this appearance of a deity, it may not be improper here to obſerve, that Philoctetes is deſcribed as fierce and inexorable, with a mind ſowered by injuries, and a heart hardened by calamity; he is not to be ſoftened by the art and ſubtlety of Ulyſſes, nor ſubdued by the honour and generoſity of Neoptolemus; a change of will could not therefore take place without departing from that propriety of character, which Sophocles always religiouſly obſerves. The deſcent of Hercules is, on this account, both neceſſary and beautiful; for though in ſome of the Greek tragedies, the interpoſition of the gods can perhaps hardly be

Once more to ſee and hear thy loved Alcides,
Who for thy ſake hath left yon heavenly manſions,
And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove;
To turn thee from the paths thou mean'ſt to tread,
And guide thy footſteps right; therefore attend:
Thou know'ſt what toils, what labours I endured,
Ere I by virtue gained immortal fame;
Thou too, like me, by toils muſt riſe to glory;
Thou too muſt ſuffer, ere thou canſt be happy;
Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls,
Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue raiſed
To higheſt rank, and leader of the war,
Paris, its hateful author, ſhalt thou ſlay,
Lay waſte proud Troy, and ſend thy trophies home,
Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy ſire
On Œta's top, the gifts which Greece beſtows
Muſt thou reſerve to grace my funeral pile,
And be a monument to after ages
Of theſe all-conquering arms.——Son of Achilles,
[turning to Neoptolemus.
(For now to thee I ſpeak) remember this,
Without his aid thou canſt not conquer Troy,
Nor Philoctetes without thee ſucceed;
Go, then, and, like two lions in the field
Roaming for prey, guard you each other well;

My

juſtified, the ſevereſt critic will, I believe, here acknowledge the 'dignus vindice nodus' of Horace. To the manner of this appearance and the machinery made uſe of on the occaſion we are left entire ſtrangers; we have no lights from antiquity concerning the decorations of the theatre, and are only told in general, that they were made with the utmoſt ſplendor and magnificence; the character of Hercules during his ſhort ſtay is ſuſtained with great dignity; he ſays no more than what is abſolutely neceſſary on the occaſion, and then reaſcends.

My Æſculapius will I ſend e'en now
To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy;
But when you lay the vanquiſhed city waſte,
Be careful that you venerate the gods;
For far above all other gifts doth Jove,
Th' almighty father, hold true piety;
Whether we live or die, that ſtill ſurvives
Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

NEO. Once more to let me hear that wiſhed for voice,
To ſee thee after ſo long a time, was bliſs
I could not hope for. O! I will obey
Thy great commands moſt willingly.

PHI. And I.

HER. Delay not, then; for, lo! a proſperous wind
Swells in thy ſail; the time invites; adieu.

[Hercules reaſcends.

PHI. I will but pay my ſalutations here,
And inſtantly depart——To thee, my cave,
Where I ſo long have dwelt, I bid farewell;
And you, ye nymphs, who on the watery plains
Deign to reſide, farewell; farewell the noiſe
Of beating waves, which I ſo oft have heard
From the rough ſea, which by the black winds driven
O'erwhelmed me ſhivering; oft th' Hermæan mount
Echoed

Be careful, &c. This is ſuppoſed by the commentators to convey a kind of prophetic cenſure of Neoptolemus, who, after his return to Troy, murthered the aged Priam, even at the altar of Hercæn Jove.

Whether we live or die, &c. "Whether we live, we live unto "the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whe-"therwe live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

St. Paul's epiſtle to the Romans, c. xiv. v. 8.

Th' Hermæan mount. A mountain in Lemnos; though ſome are of opinion, that the word Hermæan is only an epithet gene-

Echoed my plaintive voice, by wintery ſtorms
Afflicted, and returned me groan for groan.
Now, ye freſh fountains, each Lycæan ſpring
I leave you now; alas! I little thought
To leave you ever; and thou ſea-girt iſle,
Lemnos, farewell; permit me to depart
By thee unblamed, and with a proſperous gale
To go where fate demands, where kindeſt friends
By counſel urge me, where all-powerful Jove
In his unerring wiſdom hath decreed.

CHO. Let us be gone, and to the ocean nymphs
Our humble prayers prefer, that they would all
Propitious ſmile, and grant us ſafe return.

rally appropriated to mountains, from Hermes or Mercury, the god of hills and groves.

Each Lycæan ſpring. Fountains ſacred to Apollo, Lycius.

FINIS.

ANTIGONE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CREON, king of Thebes.

EURYDICE, wife of CREON.

HÆMON, ſon of CREON.

ANTIGONE, daughter of ŒDIPUS.

ISMENE, ſiſter of ANTIGONE.

TIRESIAS, a prophet.

A MESSENGER, GUARD, SERVANT and ATTENDANTS.

CHORUS,

Compoſed of antient MEN of THEBES.

ANTIGONE.

ACT I.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE.

ANTIGONE.

OH! my dear ſiſter, my beſt loved Iſmene,
Is there an evil, by the wrath of Jove
Reſerved for Œdipus' unhappy race,
We have not felt already? ſorrow and ſhame,
And bitterneſs and anguiſh, all that's ſad,
All that's diſtreſsful, hath been ours, and now

O! my dear ſiſter, &c. Eteocles and Polynices, ſons of the unfortunate Œdipus having an equal claim to the kingdom of Thebes, had agreed to divide the power, and to reign year by year alternately; but Eteocles ſtepping firſt into the throne, and taſting the ſweets of ſovereignty, broke the contract, and maintained himſelf in the poſſeſſion of his dominions. Polynices, in revenge, raiſed an army of Argians, and made an incurſion on Thebes; a battle enſued, and, after much ſlaughter on both ſides, the brothers agreed to decide it by ſingle combat; they fought, and were ſlain by each other. After the death of the brothers, the kingdom of Thebes devolved to their uncle Creon, whoſe firſt act of ſupreme power was an edict, forbidding all rites of ſepulture to Polynices, as a traitor; and pronouncing inſtant death on any who ſhould dare to bury him. Here the action of the tragedy commences, the ſubject of which is the piety of Antigone in oppoſition to the edict of Creon, with the diſtreſſes conſequent upon it. The time and place are exactly marked out in the firſt ſcene, where Antigone calls her ſiſter out of the palace into the adjoining area, to inform her of the decree which had been iſſued out on the preceding day, and her reſolutions concerning it.

This dreadful edict from the tyrant comes
To double our misfortunes; haſt thou heard
What harſh commands he hath impoſed on all,
Or art thou ſtill to know what future ills
Our foes have yet in ſtore to make us wretched?

ISM. Since that unhappy day, Antigone,
When by each other's hand our brothers fell,
And Greece diſmiſſed her armies, I have heard
Nought that could give or joy or grief to me.

ANT. I thought thou wert a ſtranger to the tidings,
And therefore called thee forth, that here alone
I might impart them to thee.

ISM. O! what are they?
For ſomething dreadful labours in thy breaſt.

ANT. Know then, from Creon, our indulgent lord,
Our hapleſs brothers met a different fate,
To honour one, and one to infamy,
He hath conſigned; with funeral rites he graced

The

With funeral rites, &c. Of all the honours paid to the dead, the care of their funerals was looked upon by the antients as moſt neceſſary and indiſpenſible; as to be deprived of ſepulture, was accounted the greateſt misfortune, and the higheſt injury. No imprecation was therefore ſo terrible as that any perſon might αθαπτος εκπιπτειν χθονος, 'die deſtitute of burial:' it was not to be wondered at that they were thus ſolicitous about the interment of their dead, when they were ſtrongly poſſeſſed with the opinion that the ſouls of the deceaſed could not be admitted into the Elyſian ſhades, but were forced to wander deſolate and alone, till their bodies were committed to the earth. Nor was it ſufficient to be honoured with the ſolemn performance of their funeral rites, except their bodies were prepared for burial by their relations, and interred in the ſepulchres of their fathers; we muſt not therefore be ſurprized to find the whole play of

The body of our dear Eeteocles,
Whilſt Polynices' wretched carcaſe lies
Unburied, unlamented, left expoſed
A feaſt for hungry vultures on the plain;
No pitying friend will dare to violate
The tyrant's harſh command, for public death
Awaits th' offender; Creon comes himſelf
To tell us of it, ſuch is our condition;
This is the criſis, this the hour, Iſmene,
That muſt declare thee worthy of thy birth,
Or ſhew thee mean, baſe, and degenerate.

ISM. What wouldſt thou have me do? defy his power?
Contemn the laws?

ANT. To act with me, or not:
Conſider and reſolve.

ISM. What daring deed
Wouldſt thou attempt? what is it? ſpeak.

ANT. To join
And take the body, my Iſmene.

Antigone turning on this ſingle incident; for though the burial of a dead body would make but an indifferent foundation for a modern tragedy, it is a ſubject of dignity and importance, and highly ſuitable to the notions and genius of antiquity.

Unlamented. This was the judgment which god denounced againſt Jehoiakim, king of Judah: 'they ſhall not lament for 'him, ſaying, ah! my brother, or ah! ſiſter; they ſhall not 'lament for him, ſaying, ah! lord, or ah! his glory; he ſhall 'be buried with the burial of an aſs, &c. Jerem. xxii. v. 18. '19.' The cuſtoms and manners of the Greeks were originally drawn from the eaſtern nations, which accounts for the ſimilitude ſo obſervable in Sophocles and other heathen writers, with ſome parts of holy writ.

ISM. Ha!
And wouldſt thou dare to bury it, when thus
We are forbidden?
ANT. Ay, to bury HIM;
He is my brother, and thine too, Iſmene;
Therefore conſent or not, I have determined
I'll not diſgrace my birth.
ISM. Hath not the king
Pronounced it death to all?
ANT. He hath no right,
No power to keep me from my own.
ISM. Alas!
Remember our unhappy father's fate;
His eyes torn out by his own fatal hand,
Oppreſt with ſhame and infamy he died;
Fruit of his crimes! a mother, and a wife,
Dreadful alliance! ſelf-devoted, fell;
And laſt, in one ſad day, Eteocles
And Polynices, by each other ſlain;
Left as we are, deſerted and forlorn,
What from our diſobedience can we hope,
But miſery and ruin? poor, weak women,
Helpleſs, nor formed by nature to contend
With powerful man; we are his ſubjects too;
Therefore to this, and worſe than this, my ſiſter,
We muſt ſubmit; for me, in humbleſt prayer

Will

Conſent or not, &c. The characters of Antigone and Iſmene are an exact counterpart to thoſe of Electra and Chryſothemis; the fierceneſs and reſolution of the one is contraſted by the ſoftneſs and timidity of the other. The ſentiments are nearly the ſame throughout, and, indeed, the ſimilitude of circumſtances conſidered, this was almoſt unavoidable.

Will I addreſs me to th' infernal powers,
For pardon of that crime which well they know
Sprang from neceſſity, and then obey;
Since to attempt what we can never hope
To execute, is folly all, and madneſs.

ANT. Wert thou to proffer what I do not aſk,
Thy poor aſſiſtance, I would ſcorn it now:
Act as thou wilt; I'll bury him myſelf;
Let me perform but that, and death is welcome:
I'll do the pious deed, and lay me down
By my dear brother; loving and beloved,
We'll reſt together: to the powers below,
'Tis fit we pay obedience; longer there
We muſt remain, than we can breathe on earth,
There I ſhall dwell for ever; thou, mean time,
What the gods hold moſt precious mayſt deſpiſe.

ISM. I reverence the gods; but, in defiance
Of laws, and unaſſiſted, to do this,
It were moſt dangerous.

ANT. That be thy excuſe,
Whilſt I prepare the funeral pile.

ISM. Alas!
I tremble for thee.

I tremble for thee, &c. The Antigone of Rotrou, an old French poet, whom Brumoy calls Corneille's maſter, is a pretty exact copy, and in many parts an almoſt literal tranſlation, of Sophocles; it ſeems to be written with ſpirit, as the reader will ſee by the following quotation.

ISM. Ah, que vous me cauſez une frayeur extrême!
ANT. Ne m'épouvantez pas, & tremblez ſur vous-même.
ISM. Soyez ſecrette au moins, comme je vous promets
Que par moi ce deſſein ne ſe ſçaura jamais.

ANT. Tremble for thyſelf,
And not for me.
ISM. O! do not tell thy purpoſe,
I beg thee, do not; I ſhall ne'er betray thee.
ANT. I'd have it known; and I ſhall hate thee more
For thy concealment, than if loud to all
Thou wouldſt proclaim the deed.
ISM. Thou haſt a heart
Too daring, and ill-ſuited to thy fate.
ANT. I know my duty, and I'll pay it there
Where 'twill be beſt accepted.
ISM. Couldſt thou do it;
But 'tis not in thy power.

ANT.

ANT. Si rien eſt à cacher, cachez votre foibleſſe,
Je fais gloire pour moi que ma vertu paroiſſe.
ISM. Comme dans les dangers vous vous précipitez!
ANT. Avec autant d'ardeur que vous les évitez.
ISM. Je vous l'ai dit cent fois, cette œuvre ſera vaine.
ANT. Bien, mon pouvoir ceſſant fera ceſſer ma peine.
ISM. Mais ce n'eſt pas aſſez d'entreprendre ardemment:
L'honneur de l'entrepriſe eſt en l'événement.
ANT. Vos raiſons, comme vous, ſont de ſi peu de force.
Que, loin de m'arrêter, cet obſtacle m'amorce.
Laiſſez indifferent mon bon ou mauvais ſort;
Voyez, ſi je péris, mon naufrauge du port.
Pour moi je tiens plus chère & plus digne d'envie
Une honorable mort qu'une honteuſe vie;
Et de mes ans enfin voir terminer le cours
Ne ſera qu'arriver oú je vais tous les jours.
ISM. Allez donc; que le Ciel pour vous & pour mon frere
Conduiſe ce deſſein mieux que je ne l'eſpere!
Mais vos ſoins, ſi mon cœur ne m'abuſe aujourd'hui,
Préparent un cercueil plus pour vous que pour lui.

ANT. When I know that,
It will be time enough to quit my purpoſe.
ISM. It cannot be; 'tis folly to attempt it.
ANT. Go on, and I ſhall hate thee; our dead brother,
He too ſhall hate thee as his bittereſt foe;
Go, leave me here to ſuffer for my raſhneſs;
Whate'er befals, it cannot be ſo dreadful
As not to die with honour.
ISM. Then farewell,
Since thou wilt have it ſo; and know, Iſmene
Pities thy weakneſs, but admires thy virtue.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

By Dirce's ſweetly-flowing ſtream,
Ne'er did the golden eye of day
On Thebes with fair luſtre beam,
Or ſhine with more auſpicious ray.
See, the proud Argive with his ſilver ſhield,
And glittering armour quits the hoſtile plain;
No longer dares maintain the luckleſs field,
But vanquiſhed flies, nor checks the looſened rein.

With

By Dirce's ſweetly-flowing ſtream, &c. The kingdom of Thebes, which had been torn to pieces by the diſſenſion of the two brothers, being at length by their deaths reſtored to peace and tranquillity, the principal and moſt antient inhabitants, who form the chorus, are brought together with the utmoſt propriety to ſing a ſong of triumph on the occaſion: as they are the friends and counſellors of Creon, we find them condemning Polynices as author of the war, and rejoicing in his defeat. George Rattaller, the only Latin tranſlator who has ever done juſtice to Sophocles, has turned this noble chorus into a good ſapphic ode.

With dreadful clangor, like the bird of Jove,
On ſnowy wings deſcending from above,
His vaunted powers to this devoted land
In bittereſt wrath did Polynices lead,
With creſted helmets, and a numerous band
He came, and fondly hoped that Thebes ſhould bleed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

High on the lofty tower he ſtood,
And viewed th' encircled gates below,
With ſpears that thirſted for our blood,
And ſeemed to ſcorn th' unequal foe;
But fraught with vengeance, e'er the riſing flame
Could waſte our bulwarks, or our walls ſurround,
Mars to aſſiſt the fiery ſerpent came,
And brought the towering eagle to the ground.

That

With dreadful clangor, &c. Ratallerus renders it thus,

Ut Jovis ſummo veniens olympo
Armiger plumis coopertus albis,
Devolat, latè ſtrepituque acuto
Æthera complet,
Conſtitit celſæ ſuper arcis ædes,
Enſe munitus, galeâque & armis,
Undequaque haſtis inhiabat urbi
Sanguine tinctis,
Victus at fugit trepidè, priuſquam
Poſſet inſanas ſatiare fauces,
Et nimis noſtro cupidum cruore
Tingere guttur.

The fiery ſerpent, &c. By the dragon, or fiery ſerpent, we are to underſtand the Theban army attacked by the eagle Polynices. The ſcholiaſts, who are always full of whimſical conjectures, will needs have it that the Thebans are here called ſerpents, as deſcendants of Draco, the ſon of Mars and Tilphoſa, or, as the ſons of Cadmus, who ſowed the ſerpent's teeth that ſprung up into

That god who hates the boaſtings of the proud,
Saw the rude violence of th' exulting crowd;
Already now the triumph was prepared,
The wreath of victory, and the feſtal ſong,
When Jove the claſh of golden armour heard,
And hurld his thunder on the guilty throng.

STROPHE II.

Then Capaneus, elate with pride,
Fierce as the rapid whirlwind came,
Eager he ſeemed on every ſide
To ſpread the all-devouring flame;
But ſoon he felt the winged lightning's blaſt,
By angry heaven with ſpeedy vengeance ſent,
Down from the lofty turrets headlong caſt,
For his foul crimes he met the puniſhment.

Each

armed men, as related in the third book of Ovid's metamorphoſes; though it is, after all, moſt probable that Sophocles meant no more than a compariſon of the two armies with creatures of moſt remarkable enmity to each other, in imitation of his great maſter Homer, who has made uſe of this very image on a ſimilar occaſion. See Iliad, b. 14, v. 201, with an imitation of it by Virgil, Æn. b. 11, v. 751.

That god who hates, &c. Φιλεει ο Θεος (ſays Herodotus) τα ὑπερεχοντα παντα κολυειν, 'God loveth to cut off every thing 'that is proud;' agreeable to which is the ſentiment of the holy pſalmiſt, 'The Lord preſerveth the faithful, and plenteouſly 'rewardeth the proud doer.' Pſalm xxxi. v. 19.

Then Capaneus, &c. Capaneus was one of the ſeven captains who came againſt Thebes: after he had mounted to the top of the κλιμακες, or ſcaling ladders, he was beat down with ſtones and ſlain; which gave the poets an opportunity of reporting him to have been ſtruck dead with lightning. Statius calls him, 'ſuperûm, contemptor,' 'a contemner of the gods.'

Each at his gate, long time the leaders ſtrove,
Then fled, and left their arms to conquering Jove;
Save the unhappy death-devoted pair,
The wretched brethren, who unconquered ſtood,
With rancorous hate inſpired, and fell deſpair,
They reek'd their vengeance in each other's blood.

ANTISTROPHE II.

And lo! with ſmiles propitious ſee
To Thebes, for numerous ſcars renowned!
The goddeſs comes, fair victory,
With fame and endleſs glory crowned!
Henceforth, no longer vexed by war's alarms,
Let all our ſorrows, all our labours, ceaſe;
Come, let us quit the din of rattling arms,
And fill our temples with the ſongs of peace.
The god of Thebes ſhall guide our ſteps aright,
And crown with many a lay the feſtive night.
But ſee, ſtill anxious for his native land,
Our king, Menæceus' valiant ſon, appear;
With ſome fair omen, by the gods' command,
He comes to meet his aged council here.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

AT length our empire, ſhook by civil broils,
The gods to peace and ſafety have reſtored;
Wherefore, my friends, you had our late requeſt
That you ſhould meet us here; for well I know
Your

Each at his gate, &c. The Greek is, the ſeven leaders ſtood at the ſeven gates.

Your firm allegiance to great Laius, next
To Œdipus, and his unhappy ſons;
Theſe by each other's hand untimely ſlain,
To me the ſceptre doth of right deſcend,
As next in blood: never can man be known,
His mind, his will, his paſſions, ne'er appear
Till power and office call them forth; for me,
'Tis my firm thought, and I have held it ever,
That he who rules, and doth not follow that
Which wiſdom counſels, but reſtrained by fear,
Shuts up his lips, muſt be the worſt of men;
Nor do I deem him worthy who prefers
A friend, how dear ſoever to his country.
Should I behold (witneſs all-ſeeing Jove!)
This city wronged, I never would be ſilent,
Never would make the foe of Thebes my friend,
For on her ſafety muſt depend our own;
And if ſhe flouriſh, we can never want
Aſſiſtance or ſupport: thus would I act,
And therefore have I ſent my edict forth
Touching the ſons of Œdipus, commanding
That they ſhould bury him who nobly fought
And died for Thebes, the good Eteocles,
Gracing his memory with each honour due
To the illuſtrious deed; for Polynices,
Abandoned exile, for a brother's blood
Thirſting inſatiate, he who would in flames
Have waſted all, his country, and his gods,
And made you ſlaves, I have decreed he lie
Unburied, his vile carcaſe to the birds
And hungry dogs a prey, there let him rot
Inglorious, 'tis my will; for ne'er from me
Shall vice inherit virtue's due reward,

But

But him alone who is a friend to Thebes,
Living or dead, ſhall Creon reverence ſtill.

CHO. Son of Menæceus, 'twas thy great beheſt
Thus to reward them both; thine is the power
O'er all ſupreme, the living and the dead.

CRE. Be careful, then, my orders are obeyed.

CHO. O! ſir, to younger hands commit the taſk.

CRE. I have appointed ſome to watch the body.

CHO. What then remains for us?

CRE. to ſee that none,
By your connivance, violate the law.

CHO. Scarce will the man be found ſo fond of death
As to attempt it.

CRE.

Him alone, &c. Creon, conſcious to himſelf that the edict forbidding the burial of Polynices muſt be highly unpopular, and would probably be conſtrued by his ſubjects as an act of arbitrary power, calls a council of the principal and moſt ancient inhabitants of Thebes, to whom he artfully repreſents his conduct, not as the effect of private reſentment, but of his zealous regard for the public welfare; and as he was apprehenſive that the friends of Polynices would, in ſpite of all his precautions, bury the body, he prepares them for that ſeverity with which he had reſolved to treat the offender. The council, we may obſerve, is compoſed of ſlaves, who are obliged to aſſent to what they could not approve, and ſubmit to orders which they could not reſiſt. By this lively repreſentation of the evils and miſeries of an arbitrary government, the poet pays an oblique compliment to his countrymen the Athenians, who, would naturally take a pleaſure in comparing it with the freedom and happineſs of their own. The chorus, according to Horace, ſhould indeed always appear as the friends of diſtreſſed virtue: but in this caſe, Sophocles, we ſee, is excuſable, as it could not be done, conſidering whom they were compoſed of, with any degree of propriety.

CRE. Death is the reward
Of him who dares it; but oft'times by hope
Of ſordid gain are men betrayed to ruin.

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. O! king, I cannot boaſt that hither ſent
I came with ſpeed, for oft my troubled thoughts
Have driven me back; oft to myſelf I ſaid,
Why doſt thou ſeek deſtruction? yet again,
If thou report it not, from other tongues
Creon muſt hear the tale; and thou wilt ſuffer:
With doubts like theſe oppreſſed, ſlowly I came,
And the ſhort way ſeemed like a tedioue journey;
At length I come, reſolved to tell thee all:
Whate'er th' event, I muſt ſubmit to fate.

CRE. Whence are thy fears, and why this heſitation?

MES. Firſt for myſelf; I merit not thy wrath;
It was not I, nor have I ſeen the man,
Who did the guilty deed.

CRE. Something of weight
Thou haſt t' impart, by this unuſual care,
To guard thee from our anger.

MES. Fear will come
Where danger is.

CRE. Speak, and thou haſt thy pardon.

MES. The body of Polynices ſome raſh hand
Hath buried, ſcattered o'er his corpſe the duſt.
And funeral rites performed.

CRE. Who dared do this?

MES.

Firſt for myſelf, &c. The ſervant in Terence prefaces his tale with the like formality;

Here, primum te arbitrari quod res eſt velim,
Quicquid hujus factum eſt, culpâ non factum eſt meâ.

MES. 'Tis yet unknown; no mark of inſtrument
Is left behind; the earth ſtill level all,
Nor worn by track of chariot wheel; the guard
Who watched that day call it a miracle;
No tomb was raiſed; light lay the ſcattered earth,
As only meant t' avoid th' imputed curſe;
Nor could we trace the ſteps of dog or beaſt
Paſſing that way; inſtant a tumult roſe,
The guards accuſed each other; nought was proved,
But each ſuſpected each, and all denied,
Offering, in proof of innocence, to graſp
The burning ſteel, to walk through fire, and take Their

As only meant, &c. In Greece the perſon was looked on as accurſed, and guilty of the greateſt inhumanity, who paſſed by an unburied corpſe without caſting duſt or ſoft earth upon it, which in caſes of neceſſity, was conſidered as ſufficient to gain the ghoſt's admiſſion into Pluto's dominions; travellers, therefore, though in ever ſo much haſte, if they met with a dead body, thought it their duty to ſprinkle it three times in this manner. The cuſtom is alluded to by Horace.

Quanquam feſtinas, non eſt mora longa, licebit
Injecto ter pulvere, curras. Lib. 1. od. 28.

To graſp the burning ſteel. It was uſual, in antient Greece, for perſons accuſed of any conſiderable crime to clear themſelves from the imputation, by taking a ſolemn oath that they were not guilty of it, at the ſame time holding in their hands a red hot iron called Μυδρος, which, if they expreſſed no ſenſe of pain, was admitted as a ſufficient proof of their innocence.

To walk through fire. This method of clearing themſelves is exactly ſimilar to our Saxon cuſtom of purgation by fire-ordeal, wherein the perſon accuſed paſſed blindfold and barefooted over red-hot plough-ſhares. This is ſaid to have been performed by Emma, the mother of Edward the confeſſor, to vindicate her honour from the ſcandal of incontinency with Alwyn, biſhop of Wincheſter.

Their ſolemn oath they knew not of the deed;
At length, one mightier than the reſt propoſed
(Nor could we think of better means) that all
Should be to thee diſcovered; 'twas my lot
To bring th' unwelcome tidings, and I come
To pour my news, unwilling, into ears
Unwilling to receive it, for I know
None ever loved the meſſenger of ill.

CHO. To me it ſeems as if the hand of heaven
Were in this deed.

CRE. Be ſilent, ere my rage,
Thou raſh old man, pronounce thee fool and dotard;
Horrid ſuggeſtion! think'ſt thou, then, the gods
Take care of men like theſe? would they preſerve
Or honour him who came to burn their altars,
Profane their rites, and trample on their laws?
Will they reward the bad? it cannot be:
But well I know, the murmuring citizens
Brooked not our mandate, ſhook their heads in ſecret,
And, ill-affected to me, would not ſtoop
Their haughty creſts, or bend beneath my yoke;
By hire corrupted, ſome of theſe have dared
The venturous deed: gold is the worſt of ills
That ever plagued mankind; this waſtes our cities,
Drives forth their natives to a foreign ſoil,
Taints the pure heart, and turns the virtuous mind
To baſeſt deeds; artificer of fraud
Supreme, and ſource of every wickedneſs:
The wretch corrupted for this hateful purpoſe
Muſt one day ſuffer; for, obſerve me well,
As I revere that power by whom I ſwear,
Almighty Jove, if you conceal him from me,
If to my eyes you do not bring the traitor,

Know, death alone ſhall not ſuffice to glut
My vengeance; living ſhall you hang in torments,
Till you confeſs, till you have learned from me
There is a profit not to be deſired,
And own, diſhoneſt gains have ruined more
Than they have ſaved.

MES. O! king, may I depart,
Or wait thy further orders?

CRE. Know'ſt thou not
Thy ſpeech is hateful? hence.

MES. Wherefore, my lord?

CRE. Know you not why?

MES. I but offend your ear,
They who have done the deed afflict your ſoul.

CRE. Away; thy talk but makes thy guilt appear.

MES. My lord, I did not do it.

CRE. Thou haſt ſold
Thy life for gain.

MES. 'Tis cruel to ſuſpect me,

CRE. Thou talk'ſt it bravely; but remember all,
Unleſs you do produce him, you ſhall find
The miſeries which on ill-got wealth await. [*Exit.*

MES. Would he were found! that we muſt leave to fate;
Be 't as it may, I never will return;
Thus ſafe beyond my hopes, 'tis fit I pay
My thanks to the kind gods who have preſerved me.
[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since firſt this active world began,
Nature

Since firſt this, &c. This intermede, or ſong of the chorus, ſeems to have leſs connection with the ſubject of the tragedy, than perhaps any other in Sophocles; it deſcribes the exten-

Nature is buſy all in every part;
But paſſing all in wiſdom and in art,
Superior ſhines inventive man:
Fearleſs of wintry winds, and circling waves,
He rides the ocean, and the tempeſt braves;
On him, unwearied earth, with laviſh hand,
Immortal goddeſs, all her bounty pours,
Patient beneath the rigid plough's command,
Year after year ſhe yields her plenteous ſtores.

ANTISTROPHE I.

To drive the natives of the wood
From their rude haunts, or in the cruel ſnare,
To catch the winged inhabitants of air,
Or trap the ſcaly brood;
To tame the fiery courſer, yet unbroke,
With the hard rein, or to the untried yoke
To bend the mountain bull, who wildly free
O'er the ſteep rocks had wandered unconfined;
Theſe are the arts of mortal induſtry,
And ſuch the ſubtle power of human kind.

STROPHE II.

By learning, and fair ſcience crowned,
Behold him now full-fraught with wiſdom's lore,

ſive range of human ſcience, and its application to good or evil purpoſes, according to the diſpoſitions of men. 'Cette morale (ſays Brumoy) 'tombe ſur le pretendu coupable, qui a eu 'l'adreſſe de rendre les derniers devoirs à Polynice, malgrè l'at-'tention des gardes, ſans pouvoir toutefois eviter le ſupplice 'qui l'attend.' But ſurely the refinement of French criticiſm is required to diſcover an alluſion ſo diſtant; the ode, however, abounds in fine ſentiment and expreſſion, and if not neceſſary to the buſineſs, may, at leaſt, be conſidered as an agreeable ornament to the drama.

The laws of nature anxious to explore,
With depth of thought profound:
But nought, alas! can human wiſdom ſee
In the dark boſom of futurity:
The power of wiſdom may awhile prevail,
Awhile ſuſpend a mortal's fleeting breath;
But never can her fruitleſs arts avail
To conquer fate, or ſtop the hand of death.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Man's ever-active changeful will
Sometimes to good ſhall bend his virtuous mind,
Sometimes behold him to foul deeds inclined,
And prone to every ill:
Who guiltleſs keeps the laws, is ſtill approved
By every tongue, and by his country loved;
But he who doth not, from his native land
A wretched exile, far, O! far from me,
May he be driven, by angry heaven's command,
And live devote to ſhame and infamy!

CHO. Amazement! can it be Antigone,
Or do my eyes deceive me! no, ſhe comes:
O! wretched daughter of a wretched father,
Haſt thou tranſgreſſed the laws, and art thou ta'en
In this adventurous deed, unhappy maid?

Enter ANTIGONE, and GUARD.

GUA. Behold the woman who hath done the deed;
I'th'

Far, O! far from me, &c. The Greek is μητ'εμοι παρεστιος, γενοιτο, 'ne mecum habitet,' 'let not ſuch an one live under the 'ſame roof with me.' Vetabo, ſays Horace,

Sub iiſdem
Sit trabibus, fragilemve mecum
Solvat Phaſelum. Lib. 3. od. 2.

I' th' very act of burial we ſurpriſed her:
Where is the king?

CHO. Returned as we could wiſh;
E'en now he comes this way.

Enter CREON.

CRE. Whom have we here?
Doth juſtice ſmile upon us?

GUA. O! my lord,
Never ſhould man too confident aſſert,
Much leſs by oath ſhould bind himſelf to aught,
For ſoon our judgments change, and one opinion
Deſtroys another; by thy threats alarmed,
But now, I vowed I never would return,
Yet thus preſerved, beyond my hopes, I come,
Bound by that duty which I owe to thee,
And to my country, to bring here this virgin,
Whom as ſhe ſprinkled o'er her brother's duſt
The varied wreath, we ſeized; the willing taſk
Was mine, nor as of late by lot determined:
Receive her, then, O! king, judge and condemn
The guilty, as it beſt becomes thy wiſdom;
Henceforth I ſtand acquitted.

CRE. But ſay how,
Where didſt thou find her?

GUA. To ſay all, 'twas ſhe
Who buried Polynices.

CRE. Art thou ſure?

GUA. Theſe eyes beheld her.

CRE. But ſay, how diſcovered?

GUA. Thus, then it was: no ſooner had I left thee,
Than mindful of thy wrath, with careful hands
From off the putrid carcaſe we removed

The ſcattered duſt; then to avoid the ſtench,
Exhaling noiſome, to a hill retired;
There watched at diſtance, till the mid-day ſun
Scorched o'er our heads; ſudden a ſtorm aroſe,
Shook every leaf, and rattled through the grove,
Filling the troubled element; we cloſed
Our eyes, and patient bore the wrath of heaven:
At length the tempeſt ceaſed; when we beheld
This virgin iſſuing forth, and heard her cries
Diſtreſsful, like the plaintive bird who views
The plundered neſt, and mourns her raviſhed young;
E'en thus the maid, when on the naked corſe
She caſt her eyes, loud ſhrieked, and curſt the hand
That did the impious deed, then ſprinkled o'er
The crumbled earth, and from a brazen urn,
Of richeſt work, to the loved relics thrice
Her due libations poured; we ſaw, and ſtraight
Purſued her; unappalled ſhe ſeemed, and ſtill
As we did queſtion her, confeſt it all:
It pleaſed, and yet methought it grieved me too;
To find ourſelves releaſed from woe, is bliſs
Supreme, but thus to ſee our friends unhappy,
Embitters all: I muſt be thankful ſtill
For my own ſafety, which I hold moſt dear.

CRE. Speak thou, who bend'ſt to earth thy drooping head;
Doſt thou deny the fact?

ANT. Deny it! no:
'Twas I.

CRE. [to the guard.] Retire, for thou art free; and now,
[turning to Antigone.
Be brief, and tell me; heard'ſt thou our decree?

ANT. I did; 'twas public; how could I avoid it?

CRE.

CRE. And dar'ſt thou, then, to diſobey the law?
ANT. I had it not from Jove, nor the juſt gods
Who rule below; nor could I ever think
A mortal s law, of power or ſtrength ſufficient
To abrogate th' unwritten law divine,
Immutable, eternal, not like theſe
Of yeſterday, but made ere time began:
Shall man perſuade me, then, to violate
Heaven's great commands, and make the gods my foes?
Without thy mandate, death had one day come;
For who ſhall 'ſcape it? and if now I fall
A little ſooner, 'tis the thing I wiſh:
To thoſe who live in miſery, like me,
Believe me, king, 'tis happineſs to die;
Without remorſe I ſhall embrace my fate;
But to my brother had I left the rites
Of ſepulture unpaid, I then indeed
Had been moſt wretched; this to thee may ſeem
Madneſs and folly; if it be, 'tis fit
I ſhould act thus, it but reſembles thee.
CRE. Sprung from a ſire perverſe and obſtinate,
Like him, ſhe cannot bend beneath misfortune;
But know, the proudeſt hearts may be ſubdued;
Haſt thou not marked the hardeſt ſteel, by fire
Made ſoft and flexible; myſelf have ſeen
By a ſlight reign the fiery courſer held:
'Tis not for ſlaves to be ſo haughty; yet
This proud offender, not content, it ſeems,
To violate my laws, adds crime to crime;
Smiles at my threats, and glories in her guilt;
If I ſhould ſuffer her to 'ſcape my vengeance,
She were the man, not I; but though ſhe ſprang
E'en from my ſiſter, were I bound to her

By ties more dear than is Hercæan Jove,
She ſhould not 'ſcape; her ſiſter too, I find
Accomplice in the deed; go call her forth,
[to one of the attendants.
She is within, I ſaw her raving there,
Her ſenſes loſt, the common fate of thoſe
Who practice dark and deadly wickedneſs:
[turning to Antigone.
I cannot bear to ſee the guilty ſtand
Convicted of their crimes, and yet pretend
To gloſs them o'er with ſpecious names of virtue.

ANT. I am thy captive; thou wouldſt have my life;
Will that content thee?

CRE. Yes; 'tis all I wiſh.

ANT. Why this delay, then, when thou know'ſt my words
To thee as hateful are, as thine to me?
Therefore diſpatch; I cannot live to do
A deed more glorious; and ſo theſe would all
[pointing to the Chorus,
Confeſs, were not their tongues reſtrained by fear;
It is the tyrant's privilege, we know,
To ſpeak and act what'er he pleaſe, uncenſured.

CRE. Lives there another in the land of Thebes
Who thinks as thou doſt?

ANT.

Hercæan Jove. Jupiter Hercæus, ſo called from being the guardian of every man's private habitation: in times of war and calamity, altars were erected to him, to which the unhappy fled as an aſylum. Priam is reported to have been ſlain before one of theſe, as is alluded to by Ovid.

Cui nihil Hercæi profuit ara Jovis.

The common fate, &c. According to the old adage.

Quos deus vult perdere, dementat prius,

ANT. Yes, a thouſand; theſe,
Theſe think ſo too, but dare not utter it.
CRE. Doſt thou not bluſh?
ANT. For what? why bluſh to pay
A ſiſter's duty?
CRE. But, Eteocles,
Say, was not he thy brother too?
ANT. He was.
CRE. Why then thus reverence him who leaſt deſerved it?
ANT. Perhaps that brother thinks not ſo.
CRE. He muſt,
If thou pay'ſt equal honour to them both.
ANT. He was a brother, not a ſlave.
CRE. One fought
Againſt that country which the other ſaved.
ANT. But equal death the rites of ſepulture
Decrees to both.
CRE. What! reverence alike
The guilty and the innocent!
ANT. Perhaps
The gods below eſteem it juſt.
CRE. A foe
Though dead, ſhould as a foe be treated ſtill.
ANT. My love ſhall go with thine, but not my hate.
CRE. Go then, and love them in the tomb; but know,
No woman rules in Thebes whilſt Creon lives.
CHO. Lo! at the portal ſtands the fair Iſmene,
Tears in her lovely eyes, a cloud of grief
Sits

He was. The original is, 'he was my brother by the ſame fa-'ther, and by the ſame mother;' the Greek writers, though generally conciſe, are ſometimes very prolix, as in the paſſage before us, where the ſentiment takes up a whole line in the original, and is better expreſſed in theſe two words of the tranſlation.

Sits on her brow, wetting her beauteous cheek
With pious ſorrow for a ſiſter's fate.

Enter ISMENE.

CRE. Come forth, thou ſerpent, little did I think
That I had nouriſhed two ſuch deadly foes
To ſuck my blood, and caſt me from my throne:
What ſay'ſt thou? wert thou 'complice in the deed,
Or wilt thou ſwear that thou art innocent?

ISM. I do acknowledge it, if ſhe permit me,
I was accomplice, and the crime was mine.

ANT. 'Tis falſe, thou didſt refuſe, nor would I hold
Communion with thee.

ISM. But in thy misfortunes
Let me partake, my ſiſter, let me be
A fellow-ſufferer with thee.

ANT. Witneſs, death,
And ye infernal gods, to which belongs
The great, the glorious deed! I do not love
Theſe friends in word alone.

ISM. Antigone,
Do not deſpiſe me, I but aſk to die
With thee, and pay due honours to the dead.

ANT. Pretend not to a merit which thou haſt not.
Live thou; it is enough for me to periſh.

ISM. But what is life without thee?

ANT. Aſk thy friend
And patron there. [pointing to Creon.

ISM. Why that unkind reproach,
When thou ſhouldſt rather comfort me?

ANT. Alas!
It gives me pain when I am forced to ſpeak
So bitterly againſt thee.

ISM.

ISM. Is there aught
That I can do to ſave thee?
ANT. Save thyſelf,
I ſhall not envy thee.
ISM. And will you not
Permit me then to ſhare your fate?
ANT. Thy choice
Was life; 'tis mine to die.
ISM. I told thee oft
It would be ſo.
ANT. Thou didſt, and was't not well
Thus to fulfil thy prophecy?
ISM. The crime
Was mutual, mutual be the puniſhment.
ANT. Fear not? thy life is ſafe, but mine long ſince
Devoted to the dead.
CRE. Both ſeem deprived
Of reaſon; one, indeed was ever thus.
ISM. O! king, the mind doth ſeldom keep her ſeat
When ſunk beneath misfortunes.
CRE. Sunk indeed
Thou wert, in wretchedneſs to join with her.
ISM. But what is life without Antigone?
CRE. Then think not of it; for ſhe is no more.
ISM. Wouldſt thou deſtroy thy ſon's long-deſtined wife?
CRE. O! we ſhall find a fitter bride.

ISM.

O! we ſhall find a fitter bride. The original is, Ἀρῶσιμοι γὰρ χ' ἀτέρων εἰσιν γυαι, 'arabilia ſunt aliorum arva,' which, literally tranſlated, is, 'there are other fields to be tilled.' As this image might be thought a little too groſs for modern delicacy, I have dropped it, and only retained the ſentiment which it was deſigned to convey. Retallerus has ſoftened it thus, 'haud 'fæminæ deerunt creandis liberis.'

ISM. Alas!
He will not think ſo.
CRE. I'll not wed my ſon
To a baſe woman.
ANT. O! my deareſt Hæmon!
And is it thus thy father doth diſgrace thee?
CRE. Such an alliance were as hateful to me
As is thyſelf.
ISM. Wilt thou then take her from him?
CRE. Their nuptials ſhall be finiſhed by death.
ISM. She then muſt periſh?
CRE. So muſt you and I?
Therefore no more delay; go, take them hence,
Confine them both: henceforth they ſhall not ſtir;
When death is near at hand, the braveſt fly.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thrice happy they, whoſe days in pleaſure flow,
Who never taſte the bitter cup of woe;

For

O! my deareſt Hæmon. Antigone's love of Hæmon heightens the diſtreſs of the tragedy, by ſetting in a ſtronger light the tyranny of Creon, who thus ſacrifices the happineſs of his ſon to his reſentment. Antigone becomes likewiſe a greater object of compaſſion; in ſpite of all her courage and reſolution, a ſigh eſcapes her for the fate of Hæmon, doomed to feel ſuch misfortunes from an unnatural father. Her complaint conſiſts but of a line, which a modern writer would have ſpun out to many a page.

Thrice happy they, &c. This beautiful intermede, or ſong of the chorus, ariſes naturally from the preceding circumſtances, and laments the ruin of the family of Œdipus. The ſtrophe, on the power and knowledge of Jupiter, is noble and poetical, and gives us a favourable idea of heathen piety and virtue.

For when the wrath of heaven deſcends
On ſome devoted houſe, there foul diſgrace,
With grief and all her train, attends,
And ſhame and ſorrow o'erwhelm the wretched race.
E'en as the Thracian ſea, when vexed with ſtorms,
Whilſt darkneſs hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
When the black North the troubled ſcene deforms,
And the black ſands in rapid whirlwinds ſweep,
The groaning waves beat on the trembling ſhore,
And echoing hills rebellow to the roar.

ANTISTROPHE I.

O! Labdacus, thy houſe muſt periſh all;
E'en now I ſee the ſtately ruin fall;
Shame heap'd on ſhame, and ill on ill,
Diſgrace and never-ending woes;
Some angry god purſues thee ſtill,
Nor grants or ſafety or repoſe:
One fair and lovely branch unwithered ſtood,
And braved th' inclement ſkies;
But Pluto comes, inexorable god,
She ſinks, ſhe raves, ſhe dies.

STROPHE II.

Shall man below, controul the gods above,
Or human pride reſtrain the power of Jove,
Whoſe eyes by all-ſubduing ſleep Are

O! Labdacus, &c. The genealogy of the unfortunate houſe of Œdipus runs thus: 'Cadmus, Polydorus, Labdacus, Laius, , Œdipus, Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone and Iſmene.'

One fair and lovely branch, &c. The chorus here plainly alludes to the unfortunate Antigone, whom Pluto, or the infernal gods, obliged to pay funeral rites to her brother Polynices.

Whoſe eyes, &c. "He that keepeth thee will not ſlumber." Behold, he that "keepeth Iſrael ſhall neither ſlumber nor ſleep." Pſalm cxxi. v. 3. 4.

Are never cloſed, as feeble mortals' are,
But ſtill their watchful vigils keep
Through the large circle of th' eternal year!
Great lord of all, whom neither time nor age
With envious ſtroke can weaken or decay;
He, who alone the future can preſage,
Who knows alike to-morrow as to-day;
Whilſt wretched man is doomed, by heaven's decree,
To toil and pain, to ſin and miſery.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Oft times the flatterer hope, that joy inſpires,
Fills the proud heart of man with fond deſires;
He, careleſs trav'ller, wanders ſtill
Through life, unmindful of deceit,
Nor dreads the danger, till he feel
The burning ſands beneath his feet:
When heaven impels to guilt the maddening mind,
Then good like ill appears,
And vice, for univerſal hate deſigned,
The face of virtue wears. [*Exeunt.*

ACT

Th' eternal year. The Greek is ακαματοι Θεων μηνες, 'the 'untired months of the gods,' which conveys a fine image, but would not admit of a literal tranſlation.

He, careleſs trav'ller, &c. Sophocles ſays,

Ειδοτι δ' ουδεν, ερπει
Πριν πυρι δερμω ποδα τις προσαρη.

'Nihil enim ſcienti contingit,
'Priuſquam igni ardenti pedem quis admoverit.'

This beautiful image is, we ſee, but imperfectly glanced at in the original; I have endeavoured to expreſs it more fully in the tranſlation. Horace ſeems to have caught this idea in his

'Incedis per ignes
'Suppoſitos cineri doloſo.' Hor.

ACT III.

CREON, HÆMON, CHORUS.

BEHOLD, O! king, thy youngeſt hope appear,
The noble Hæmon; loſt in grief he ſeems,
Weeping the fate of poor Antigone.

CRE. He comes, and better than a prophet, ſoon
Shall we divine his inmoſt thoughts: my ſon,
Com'ſt thou, well-knowing our decree, to mourn
Thy promiſed bride, and angry to diſpute
A father's will; or whatſoe'er we do
Still to hold beſt, and pay obedience to us?

HÆM. My father, I am thine; do thou command,
And I in all things ſhall obey; 'tis fit
My promiſed nuptial rites give place to thee.

CRE. It will become thee with obedience thus
To bear thee ever, and in every act
To yield ſubmiſſive to a father's will:
'Tis therefore, O! my ſon, that men do pray
For children who with kind officious duty
May guard their helpleſs age, reſiſt their foes,
And, like their parents, love their parent's friend;
But he who gets a diſobedient child,
What doth he get but miſery and woe?
His enemies will laugh the wretch to ſcorn:

Take

His enemies, &c. The ſcripture expreſſion, which I have here made uſe of, ſeems to convey the moſt exact idea of the original; one cannot read this paſſage of Sophocles, without recollecting the words of the Pſalmiſt:

'Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even ſo are the 'young children;

'Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they

Take heed, my ſon, thou yield not up thy reaſon,
In hopes of pleaſure from a worthleſs woman;
For cold is the embrace of impious love,
And deep the wounds of falſe, diſſembled friendſhip;
Hate, then, thy bittereſt foe, deſpiſe her arts,
And leave her to be wedded to the tomb;
Of all the city, her alone I found
Rebellious; but I have her, nor ſhall Thebes
Say I'm a liar; I pronounced her fate,
And ſhe muſt periſh; let her call on Jove,
Who guards the rites of kindred, and the ties
Of nature; for if thoſe by blood united
Tranſgreſs the laws, I hold myſelf more near
E'en to a ſtranger: who in private life
Is juſt and good, will to his country too
Be faithful ever; but the man who, proud
And fierce of ſoul, contemns authority,
Deſpiſeth juſtice, and o'er thoſe who rule
Would have dominion, ſuch ſhall never gain
Th' applauding voice of Creon; he alone,
Whom the conſenting citizens approve,
Th' acknowledged ſovereign, ſhould in all command;

Juſt

'ſhall not be aſhamed when they ſpeak with their enemies in 'the gate.' Pſal. cxxvii. v. 5, 6.

Th' acknowledged ſovereign, &c. Sophocles, with the utmoſt propriety, puts the maxims of arbitrary government into the mouth of a tyrant, whoſe character he deſigns to render moſt odious and deteſtable to his countrymen, the free citizens of Athens. In the old poet Rotrou, we find the paſſage before us thus illuſtrated and adapted to a French theatre;

'Sur les deſſeins des Rois, comme ſur ceux des dieux,
'Des fidéles ſujets doivent fermer les yeux,
'Et ſoumettant leur ſens au pouvoir des couronnes,
'Quelles que ſoient les loix, croire qu'elles ſont bonnes.

Juſt or unjuſt his laws, in things of great
Or little import, whatſoe'er he bids,
A ſubject is not to diſpute his will;
He knows alike to rule and to obey;
And in the day of battle will maintain
The foremoſt rank, his country's beſt defence.
Rebellion is the worſt of human ills;
This ruins kingdoms, this deſtroys the peace
Of nobleſt families, this wages war,
And puts the brave to flight; whilſt fair obedience
Keeps all in ſafety; to preſerve it ever
Should be a King's firſt care; we will not yield
To a weak woman; if we muſt ſubmit,
At leaſt we will be conquered by a man,
Nor by a female arm thus fall inglorious.

HÆM. Wiſdom, my father, is the nobleſt gift
That gods beſtow on man, and better far
Than all his treaſures; what thy judgment deems
Moſt fit, I cannot, would not reprehend;
Others, perhaps, might call it wrong; for me,
My duty only bids me to inform you
If aught be done or ſaid that caſts reproach
Or blame on you: ſuch terror would thy looks
Strike on the low plebeian, that he dare not
Say aught unpleaſing to thee: be it mine
To tell thee, then, what I of late have heard

Such terror, &c. Rotrou has tranſlated, or rather paraphraſed, this with ſpirit:

Jamais la verité cette fille timide,
Pour entrer chez les rois ne trouve qui la guide,
Au lieu que le menſonge a mille partiſans,
Et vous eſt préſenté par mille courtiſans.

In ſecret whiſpered; your afflicted people
United mourn the unhappy virgin's fate
Unmerited, moſt wretched of her ſex,
To die for deeds of ſuch diſtinguiſhed virtue,
For that ſhe would not let a brother lie
Unburied, to the dogs and birds a prey;
Was it not rather, ſay the murmuring crowd,
Worthy of golden honours, and fair praiſe?
Such are their dark and ſecret diſcontents.
Thy welfare and thy happineſs alone
Are all my wiſh; what can a child deſire
More than a father's honour, or a father
More than his child's? O! do not then retain
Thy will, and ſtill believe no ſenſe but thine
Can judge aright: the man who proudly thinks
None but himſelf or eloquent or wiſe,
By time betrayed, is branded for an idiot;
True wiſdom will be ever glad to learn,
And not too fond of power; obſerve the trees
That bend to wintry torrents, how their boughs
Unhurt remain, whilſt thoſe that brave the ſtorm,
Uprooted torn, ſhall wither and decay;
The pilot, whoſe unſlackened ſail defies
Contending winds, with ſhattered bark purſues
His dangerous courſe; then mitigate thy wrath,
My father, and give way to ſweet repentance.

If

What can a child, &c. The filial piety, obedience, and ſoftneſs of Hæmon, is finely contraſted to the impious ſeverity, and inexorable cruelty, of his father; we cannot, at the ſame time, but perceive, that his anſwer to Creon is, conſidering his circumſtances, rather too cold and ſententious; 'la morale (as Brumoy obſerves) 'eſt pouſſée aſſez lion, à la maniére des Grecs.'

If to my youth be aught of judgment given,
He, who by knowledge and true wiſdom's rules
Guides every action, is the firſt of men;
But ſince to few that happineſs is given,
The next is he, who, not too proud to learn,
Follows the counſels of the wiſe and good.

CHO. O! king, if right the youth adviſe, 'tis fit
That thou ſhouldſt liſten to him; ſo to thee
Should he attend, as beſt may profit both.

CRE. And have we lived ſo long then to be taught
At laſt our duty by a boy like thee?

HÆM. Young though I am, I ſtill may judge aright;
Wiſdom in action lies, and not in years.

CRE. Call you it wiſdom then to honour thoſe
Who diſobey the laws?

HÆM. I would not have thee
Protect the wicked.

CRE. Is ſhe not moſt guilty?

HÆM. Thebes doth not think her ſo.

CRE. Shall Thebes preſcribe
To Creon's will?

HÆM. How weakly doſt thou talk!

CRE. Am I king here, or ſhall another reign?

HÆM. 'Tis not a city where but one man rules.

CRE. The city is the king's.

HÆM. Go by thyſelf then,
And rule henceforth o'er a deſerted land.

CRE. [to the chorus] He pleads the woman's cauſe.

Wiſdom in action, &c. 'Honourable age (ſays Solomon) is 'not that which ſtandeth in length of time, nor that is meaſured 'by number of years; but wiſdom is the grey hair unto men, 'and an unſpotted life is old age.' Book of Wiſdom.

HÆM. If thou art ſhe,
I do; for, O! I ſpeak but for thy ſake;
My care is all for thee.
CRE. Abandoned wretch!
Diſpute a father's will!
HÆM. I ſee thee err,
And therefore do it.
CRE. Is it then a crime
To guard my throne and rights from violation?
HÆM. He cannot guard them, who contemns the gods,
And violates their laws.
CRE. O! thou art worſe,
More impious e'en than ſhe thou haſt defended.
HÆM. Nought have I done to merit this reproof.
CRE. Haſt thou not pleaded for her?
HÆM. No; for thee,
And for myſelf; for the infernal gods.
CRE. But know, ſhe ſhall not live to be thy wife.
HÆM. Then ſhe muſt die; another too may fall.
CRE. Ha! doſt thou threaten me? audacious traitor.
HÆM. What are my threats? alas! thou heed'ſt them not.

CRE.

Another too may fall. The Greek is θανσ' ὁλεῖ τινα· 'When 'ever ſhe dies, ſhe will deſtroy ſomebody.' The ſenſe, we ſee, is purpoſely left ambiguous; Creon imagines that Hæmon has a deſign upon his life; it appears, afterwards, that he meant his own. This whole ſcene conſiſts in the original, of ſhort ſpeeches of one verſe each, containing an equal number of ſyllables in every line, which, one would imagine, muſt have cauſed a diſagreeable monotony throughout; a circumſtance which I have endeavoured to avoid in the tranſlation, by frequently dividing the blank verſe between the two ſpeakers, which relieves the ear of the reader, and would, on the ſtage, give more life and ſpirit to the action.

CRE. That thou ſhalt ſee; thy inſolent inſtruction
Shall coſt thee dear.
HÆM. But for thou art my father,
Now would I ſay thy ſenſes were impaired.
CRE. Think not to make me thus thy ſcorn and laugh-
Thou woman's ſlave. [ter,
HÆM. Still wouldſt thou ſpeak thyſelf,
And never liſten to the voice of truth;
Such is thy will.
CRE. Now by Olympus here
I ſwear, thy vile reproaches ſhall not paſs
Unpuniſhed; call her forth: before her bridegroom
[to one of the attendants]
She ſhall be brought, and periſh in his ſight.
HÆM. Theſe eyes ſhall never ſee it; let the ſlaves
Who fear thy rage ſubmit to it; but know,
'Tis the laſt time thou ſhalt behold thy ſon.
[Exit Hæmon.
CHO. Sudden in anger fled the youth; O! king,
A mind oppreſſed like his is deſperate.
CRE. Why, let him go; and henceforth better learn
Than to oppoſe me; be it as it may,
Death is their portion, and he ſhall not ſave them.
CHO. Muſt they both die then?
CRE. No; 'tis well adviſed,
Iſmene lives; but for Antigone—
CHO. O! king, what death is ſhe decreed to ſuffer?
CRE. Far from the haunts of men I'll have her led,
And in a rocky cave, beneath the earth,
Buried alive; with her a little food,

With her a little food. To deſtroy any one by famine was looked on by the Grecians as impious; probably (as is obſerved by the

Enough to ſave the city from pollution:
There let her pray the only god ſhe worſhips
To ſave her from this death: perhaps he will,
Or if he doth not, let her learn how vain
It is to reverence the powers below.

[*Exit* Creon.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Mighty power, all powers above,
Great unconquerable love!
Thou, who ly'ſt in dimple ſleek,
On the tender virgin's cheek,
Thee the rich and great obey,
Every creature owns thy ſway.
O'er the wide earth and o'er the main
Extends thy univerſal reign;
All thy maddening influence know,
Gods above and men below;
All thy powers reſiſtleſs prove,
Great unconquerable love!

ANTI-

ſcholiaſt on this paſſage) becauſe it reflected diſgrace on any country to ſuffer its inhabitants to periſh by hunger; when they buried perſons alive, therefore, it was cuſtomary to give them a ſmall quantity of victuals, 'οπως μιασμα (ſays Sophocles) υπεκφυγοι 'πολις,' 'that the city might eſcape pollution;' a piece of Pagan ſuperſtition, not unlike our modern jeſuitiſm, calculated, we may obſerve, with a deſign to ſeparate crimes from gilt, and give tyrants a power to gratify their reſentment with impunity.

Mighty power, &c. The ladies will probably be ſurpriſed, and, I doubt not, equally pleaſed, to meet, in ſo ancient a writer as Sophocles, with an ode expreſsly on the power of love; though they may at the ſame time, find fault with my author's brevity, on a ſubject ſo extenſive.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou canſt lead the juſt aſtray,
From wiſdom and from virtue's way;
The ties of nature ceaſe to bind,
When thou diſturb'ſt the captive mind.
Behold, enſlaved by fond deſire,
The youth contemns his aged ſire.
Enamoured of his beauteous maid,
Nor laws nor parents are obeyed;
Thus Venus wills it from above,
And great, unconquerable love.

CHO. E'en I, beyond the common bounds of grief,
Indulge my ſorrows, and from theſe ſad eyes
Fountain of tears will flow, when I behold
Antigone, unhappy maid, approach
The bed of death, and haſten to the tomb.

Enter ANTIGONE.

ANT. Farwell, my friends, my countrymen, farewell!

Farewell, my friends, &c. This lamentation of Antigone, though perhaps more agreeable to the taſte of the antients than our own, is extremely beautiful and pathetic; we meet with another of the ſame kind in the laſt act of the Iphigenia in Aulis, by Euripides. Such, we may imagine, was the lamentation of the daughter of Jephtha, when ſhe went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains, as it is related in the 12th chapter of the book of Judges. Brumoy judiciouſly obſerves on this paſſage, that the grief here expreſſed by Antigone, is not in the leaſt inconſiſtent with her character; as to meet death with inſenſibility, is rather brutality than heroiſm. At the ſame time that Antigone makes the ſacrifice of life, ſhe ſeems conſcious of its value; her complaints are the laſt ſighs of nature, which, ſo far from diminiſhing true greatneſs of mind, ſerves but to give it a more diſtinguiſhing luſter. The ſpeeches of Antigone, in the orginal are in ſtrophe

Here on her laſt ſad journey you behold
The poor Antigone; for never more
Shall I return, or view the light of day:
The hand of death conducts me to the ſhore
Of dreary Acheron; no nuptial ſong
Reſerved for me, the wretched bride alone
Of Pluto now, and wedded to the tomb

CHO. Be it thy glory ſtill, that by the ſword
Thou fall'ſt not, nor the ſlow-conſuming hand
Of foul diſtemperature, but far diſtinguiſhed
Above thy ſex, and to thyſelf a law,
Doom'ſt thy own death, ſo ſhall thy honour live,
And future ages venerate thy name.

ANT. Thus Tantalus' unhappy daughter fell,
The Phrygian Niobe: high on the top
Of towering Sipylus the rock enfolds her,
E'en as the ivy twines her tendrils round
The lofty oak, there ſtill (as fame reports)
To melting ſhowers, and everlaſting ſnow
Obvious ſhe ſtands, her beauteous boſom wet
With tears, that from her ever-ſtreaming eyes
Inceſſant flow; her fate reſembles mine.

CHO. A goddeſs ſhe, and from a goddeſs ſprung;
We are but mortal, and of mortals born:
To meet the fate of gods thus in thy life.
And in thy death, O! tis a glorious doom.

ANT.

and antiſtrophe, but, as they are interrupted by the replies of the chorus, would, I thought, have appeared aukward in ode or rhyme; I have, therefore, preſerved the blank verſe.

The Phrygian Niobe. The ſtory of Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, changed into a rock, is too well known to need any explanation. See Ovid's Metamorphoſis, book 6.

ANT. Alas! thou mock'ſt me! why, whilſt yet I live,
Wouldſt thou afflict me with reproach like this?
O! my dear country, and my dearer friends,
Its bleſt inhabitants, renowned Thebes!
And ye Dircænan fountains, you I call
To witneſs, that I die by laws unjuſt,
To my deep priſon unlamented go.
To my ſad tomb, no fellow-ſufferer there
To ſooth my woes, the living, or the dead.

CHO. Raſhneſs like thine muſt meet with ſuch reward;
A father's crimes, I fear, lie heavy on thee.

ANT. Oh! thou haſt touched my worſt of miſeries!
My father's fate, the woes of all our houſe,
The wretched race of Labdacus, renowned
For its misfortunes! O! the guilty bed
Of thoſe from whom I ſprang; unhappy offspring
Of parents moſt unhappy! lo! to them
I go accurſed; a virgin and a ſlave.
O! my poor brother! moſt unfortunate
Were thy ſad nuptials; they have ſlain thy ſiſter.

CHO. Thy piety demands our praiſe; but know,
Authority is not to be deſpiſed;
'Twas thy own raſhneſs brought deſtruction on thee.

ANT. Thus friendleſs, unlamented muſt I tread
The deſtined path, no longer to behold
Yon ſacred light, and none ſhall mourn my fate.

Enter CREON.

CRE. Know ye not, ſlaves like her to death devoted
Would never ceaſe their wailings? wherefore is it
You

Thy ſad nuptials. Polynices married the daughter of Adraſtus, who, in defence of his ſon-in-law, led his Argians againſt Thebes: thus his marriage was the cauſe of his death, and the decree againſt Antigone conſequent upon it.

You thus delay to execute my orders?
Let her be carried inſtant to the cave,
And leave her there alone, to live, or die;
Her blood reſts not on us; but ſhe no longer
Shall breathe on earth. [*Exit* Creon.

ANT. O! dreadful marriage bed;
O! my deep dungeon! my eternal home,
Whither I go to join my kindred dead!
For not a few hath fell Perſephone
Already ta'en; to her I go, the laſt
And moſt unhappy, ere my time was come;
But ſtill I have ſweet hope I ſhall not go
Unwelcome to my father, nor to thee,
My mother; dear to thee, Eteocles,
Still ſhall I ever be; theſe pious hands
Waſhed your pale bodies, and adorned you both
With rites ſepulchral, and libations due:
And thus, my Polynices, for my care
Of thee am I rewarded, and the good
Alone ſhall praiſe me: for a huſband dead,
Nor, had I been a mother, for my children
Would I have dared to violate the laws:
Another huſband and another child
Might ſooth affliction; but, my parents dead,
A brother's loſs could never be repaired, And

A brother's loſs, &c. Sophocles viſibly alludes in this paſſage to the following ſtory, told by Herodotus in his Thalia:

Darius ſuſpecting that Intaphernes and his relations might raiſe a rebellion againſt him, cauſed him to be ſeized with his children and family; whilſt they were under confinement, and bound in order to execution, the wife of Intaphernes went to the gates of the palace, weeping and lamenting loudly, which ſhe continued ſo aſſiduouſly, that at laſt Darius, moved with compaſſion, ſent a meſſenger to ſpeak to her in theſe terms, "Woman the king gives

And therefore did I dare the venturous deed,
And therefore die by Creon's dread command.
Ne'er ſhall I taſte of Hymen's joys, or know
A mother's pleaſures in her infant race;
But, friendleſs and forlorn, alive deſcend
Into the dreary manſions of the dead:
And how have I offended the juſt gods!
But wherefore call on them! will they protect me,
When thus I meet with the reward of ill
For doing good? if this be juſt, ye gods,
If I am guilty let me ſuffer for it;
But if the crime be theirs, O! let them feel
That weight of miſery they have laid on me.

CHO. The ſtorm continues, and her angry ſoul
Stills pours its ſorrows forth.

Enter CREON.

CRE. The ſlaves ſhall ſuffer
For this delay. ANT.

" you the life of any one among your relations, who are priſon-
" ers, and leaves you the choice of the perſon." " Since the
" king," ſaid ſhe, after ſome deliberation, " will grant me no
" more than one, I chuſe my brother." Darius, when he heard her anſwer, wondering at her choice, diſpatched another meſſenger, to aſk her, in his name, " why ſhe had ſhewn ſo little regard to
" her huſband and children, and rather choſe to ſave the life of
" her brother, who was not ſo near related to her as her chil-
" dren, nor could be ſo dear to her as her huſband?" She anſwered, " that, by the permiſſion of God, ſhe might have ano-
" ther huſband, and other children, if ſhe ſhould be deprived of
" thoſe ſhe had; but could never have another brother, becauſe
" her father and mother were already dead." The king was ſo well pleaſed with this anſwer, that he not only pardoned her btother, but gave her likewiſe the life of her eldeſt ſon, and put all the reſt to death.

See Littlebury's Herodotus, v. 1, p. 318.

ANT. Alas! death cannot be
Far from that voice.
CRE. I would not have thee hope
A moment's reſpite.
ANT. O! my country's gods!
And thou, my native Thebes, I leave you now;
Look on me, princes, ſee the laſt of all
My royal race, ſee what I ſuffer, ſee
From whom I bear it, from the worſt of men,
Only becauſe I did delight in virtue.

[*Exit* Creon.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Remember what fair Danea endured,
Condemned to change heaven's chearful light
For ſcenes of horror and of night,
Within a brazen tower long time immured;
Yet was the maid of nobleſt race,
And honoured e'en with Jove's embrace;
But O! whan fate decrees a mortal's woe,
Nought can reverſe the doom, or ſtop the blow,
Nor heaven above, nor earth and ſeas below. ANTI-

Remember what, &c. The chorus, as dependants on Creon, could neither defend nor aſſiſt Antigone, they can only lament thoſe misfortunes which it was not in their power to remove; they endeavour, therefore, to aſſuage her grief by the mention of other illuſtrious perſons, whom they compare with her, not in their guilt, but in their ſufferings.

Fair Danea. Acriſius, king of the Argives, having been warned by an oracle, that he ſhould be ſlain by his grandſon, ſhut up his daughter Danae in a brazen tower; Jupiter, however, according to the poets, gained acceſs to her, by transforming himſelf into a golden ſhower. Horace has applied this fiction with his uſual elegance. See book 3. od. 16.

ANTISTROPHE I.

The Thracian monarch, Dryas' hapleſs ſon,
Chained to a rock in torment lay,
And breathed his angry ſoul away,
By wrath miſguided, and by pride undone;
Taught by th' offended god to know
From foul reproach what evils flow;
For he the rites profaned with ſlanderous tongue.
The holy flame he quenched, diſturbed the ſong,
And waked to wrath the muſes' tuneful throng.

STROPHE II.

His turbid waves, where Salmydeſſus rolled
And proud Cyanea's rocks divide the flood,
There from thy temple, Mars, didſt thou behold
The ſons of Phineus weltering in their blood;
A mother

The Thracian monarch. Lycurgus king of Thrace, for contemning, or diſturbing the rites of Bacchus, was, according to Sophocles, chained to a rock, where he periſhed. Homer puniſhes him with blindneſs. See the Iliad, b. 7. Some are of opinion that the fable took its riſe from the monarch's virtuous regard for his people, who ſeeing the ill effects of their intemperance in the uſe of wine, cauſed all the vines in his country to be rooted up and deſtroyed. Brumoy, by miſtake, calls this Thracian monarch Orpheus, though he is both here and in Homer ſpecified as the ſon of Dryas, and conſequently can be no other than the Lycurgus abovementioned.

Salmydeſſus, &c. Salmydeſſus was a river in Thrace, near which was a temple dedicated to Mars. The Cyaneæ were two rock, or ſmall iſlands, near the Thracian Boſphorus.

The ſons of Phineus. Plexippus and Pandion, whoſe eyes were put out by their ſtep-mother Idæa, the wife of Phineus, after the death of their own mother Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, whoſe fate is alluded to in the latter part of the ode.

A mother did the cruel deed,
A mother bade her children bleed;
Both, by her impious hand, deprived of light,
In vain lamented long their raviſhed ſight,
And cloſed their eyes in never-ending night.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Long time they wept a better mother's fate,
Unhappy offſpring of a luckleſs bed!
Yet nobly born, and eminently great
Was ſhe, and midſt ſequeſtered caverns bred;
Her father's angry ſtorms among,
Daughter of gods, from Boreas ſprung;
Equal in ſwiftneſs to the bounding ſteed,
She ſkimmed the mountains with a courſer's ſpeed,
Yet was the nymph to death and miſery decreed.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

TIRESIAS, GUIDE, CREON, CHORUS.

TIRESIAS.

PRINCES of Thebes, behold, conducted hither
By my gentle guide, (ſuch is the blind man's fate)
Tireſias comes.

CRE. O! venerable prophet,
What haſt thou to impart?

TIR.

Princes of Thebes. The name Αναξες, or princes among the Greeks, was given not only to ſovereigns, but frequently to the principal and moſt honourable members of the commonwealth; Tireſias, we ſee, compliments the ancient citizens of Thebes, who compoſed the chorus, with this title.

TIR. I will inform thee;
Obſerve, and be obedient.
CRE. Have I not
Been ever ſo?
TIR. Thou haſt; and therefore Thebes
Hath flouriſhed ſtill——
CRE. By thy protecting hand.
TIR. Therefore be wiſe; for know, this very hour
Is the important criſis of thy fate.
CRE. Speak then, what is it? how I dread thy words!
TIR. When thou haſt heard the portents which my art
But now diſcovered, thou wilt ſee it all.
Know then, that ſitting on my antient throne
Augurial, whence each divination comes,
Sudden a ſtrange unuſual noiſe was heard
Of birds, whoſe loud and barb'rous diſſonance
I knew

Obſerve, and be obedient. The prophet Tireſias is here introduced with great propriety; his appearance has ſomething in it very ſolemn and affecting, his age and blindneſs adding a kind of melancholy dignity to the ſcene: the tyrant himſelf, we ſee, pays, at firſt, the utmoſt deference to his authority, and trembles at his power, though he afterwards treats him with contempt, and even accuſes him of being corrupted by the friends of Antigone. This conduct of the poet is artful, as it raiſes the character of the prophet, and heightens his conſequence, at the ſame time that it aggravates the gilt of Creon, by repreſenting him as a contemner of the gods, and renders him a fitter object of divine vengeance.

Of birds, &c. Divination by birds was in great eſteem among the antients; the augurs were cloathed in white, with a crown of gold upon their heads, and ſeated on a kind of throne, from whence, as the ſcholiaſt informs us, they had power to aſſemble the birds from all quarters, whenever they had occaſion for them. Tireſias does not tell us what birds they were that he heard fighting in the air, moſt probably vultures, as they feed only on

I knew not how t' interpret; by the ſound
Of claſhing wings, I could diſcover well
That with their bloody claws they tore each other;
Amazed and fearful, inſtantly I tried,
On burning altars, holy ſacrifice;
When, from the victim, lo! the ſullen flame
Aſpired not; ſmothered in the aſhes, ſtill
Laid the moiſt fleſh, and, rolled in ſmoke, repelled
The riſing fire, whilſt from their fat the thighs
Were ſeparate; all theſe ſigns of deadly omen,
Boding dark vengeance, did I learn from him;
[pointing to the guide]
He is my leader, king, and I am thine.
Then mark me well; from thee theſe evils flow,
From thy unjuſt decree; our altars all
Have been polluted by th' unhallowed food
Of birds and dogs, that preyed upon the corſe
Of wretched Ædipus' unhappy ſon;
Nor will the gods accept our offered prayers,

Or

and other birds of prey, were always ſuppoſed to foretel blood and ſlaughter.

From the victim, &c. Tireſias, alarmed at the fighting of the birds, proceeds to the πυρομαντεια, or divination by fire of the ſacrifice, which terrifies him with freſh omens; for, when the fire was kindled with difficulty, when the flame was divided, when it did not immediately ſpread itſelf over all the parts of the victim, but conſumed them by degrees; when, inſtead of aſcending in a ſtraight line, it whirled round, or was extinguiſhed; when it caſt forth a thick black ſmoke; when the μηροι, or thighs of the victim, parts appropriated more particularly to the gods, were not covered with fat, in order to comſume them more quickly: all theſe were conſidered as marks of the divine diſpleaſure, and infallible portents of future miſery.

Or from our hands receive the ſacrifice;
No longer will the birds ſend forth their ſounds
Auſpicious, fattened thus with human blood.
Conſider this, my ſon; and, O! remember,
To err is human; 'tis the common lot
Of frail mortality; and he alone
Is wiſe and happy, who, when ills are done,
Perſiſts not, but would heal the wound he made;
But ſelf-ſufficent obſtinacy ever
Is folly's utmoſt height: where is the glory
To ſlay the ſlain, or perſecute the dead?
I wiſh thee well, and therefore have ſpoke thus;
When thoſe who love adviſe, 'tis ſweet to learn.

CRE. I know, old man, I am the general mark,
The butt of all, and you all aim at me:
For me, I know, your prophecies were made,
And I am ſold to this deteſted race;
Betrayed to them: but make your gains; go, purchaſe
Your Sardian amber, and your Indian gold;
They ſhall not buy a tomb for Polynices:
No, ſhould the eagle ſeek him for his food,
And, towering, bear him to the throne of Jove,
I would not bury him; for well I know,
The gods by mortals cannot be polluted;
But the beſt men, by ſordid gain corrupt,
Say all that's ill, and fall beneath the loweſt.

TIR. Who knows this, or who dare accuſe us of it?

CRE. What mean'ſt thou by that queſtion? aſk'ſt thou [who?

Your Sardian amber. Sardis was a principal city of Lydia, near the river Pactolus, celebrated in the fables of antiquity for what it never had, ſands of gold; Sophocles calls it ηλεκτρου, or amber, probably on account of its tranſparency.

TIR. How far is wiſdom beyond every good!
CRE. As far as folly beyond every ill.
TIR. That's a diſtemper thou'rt afflicted with.
CRE. I'll not revile a prophet.
TIR. But thou doſt;
Thou'lt not believe me.
CRE. Your prophetic race
Are lovers all of gold.
TIR. Tyrants are ſo,
Howe'er ill-gotten.
CRE. Know'ſt thou 'tis a king
Thou'rt talking thus to?
TIR. Yes, I know it well;
A king, who owes to me his country's ſafety.
CRE. Thou'rt a wiſe prophet, but thou art unjuſt.
TIR. Thou wilt oblige me then to utter that
Which I had purpoſed to conceal.
CRE. Speak out,
Say what thou wilt, but ſay it not for hire.
TIR. Thus may it ſeem to thee.
CRE. But know, old man,
I am not to be ſold.
TIR. Remember this:
Not many days ſhall the bright ſun perform
His ſtated courſe, ere, ſprung from thy own loins,
Thyſelf ſhall yield a victim, in thy turn
Thou too ſhalt weep, for that thy cruel ſentence
Decreed a guiltleſs virgin to the tomb,
And kept on earth, unmindful of the gods,
Ungraced, unburied, an unhallowed corſe,
Which not to thee, nor to the gods above

Of

Nor to the gods above, &c. The heathen deities were divided into the ſuperi, and the inferi, the gods above, and the gods be-

Of right belonged; 'twas arbitrary power:
But the avenging furies lie concealed,
The miniſters of death have ſpread the ſnare,
And with like woes await to puniſh thee;
Do I ſay this from hopes of promiſed gold?
Paſs but a little time, and thou ſhalt hear
The ſhrieks of men, the women's loud laments,
O'er all thy palace; ſee th' offended people
Together rage; thy cities all by dogs
And beaſts and birds polluted, and the ſtench
Of filth obſcene on every altar laid.
Thus from my angry ſoul have I ſent forth
Its keeneſt arrows (for thou haſt provoked me)
Nor ſhall they fly in vain, or thou eſcape
The deſtined blow: now, boy, conduct me home;
On younger heads the tempeſt of his rage
Shall fall; but, henceforth let him learn to ſpeak
In humbler terms, and bear a better mind.

[*Exit* Tireſias.

CHO. He's gone, and dreadful were his prophecies;
Since theſe grey hairs were o'er my temples ſpread,
Nought from thoſe lips hath flowed but ſacred truth.

CRE. I know there hath not, and am troubled much
For the event: 'tis grating to ſubmit,
And yet the mind, ſpite of itſelf, muſt yield
In ſuch diſtreſs.

CHO. Son of Menæceus, now
Thou need'ſt moſt counſel.

CRE. What wouldſt thou adviſe?
I will obey thee.

low; to the latter of theſe, the Θεοι υπτεροι, or, infernal powers, belonged the care of the dead, whom Creon had offended by refuſing burial to the corpſe of Polynices.

CHO. Set the virgin free,
And let a tomb be raiſed for Polynices.
CRE. And doſt thou counſel thus? and muſt I yield?
CHO. Immediately, O! king, for vengeance falls
With haſty footſteps on the guilty head.
CRE. I cannot; yet I muſt reverſe the ſentence;
There is no ſtruggling with neceſſity.
CHO. Do it thyſelf, nor truſt another hand.
CRE. I will; and you, my ſervants, be prepared;
Each with his axe quick haſten to the place;
Myſelf (for thus I have reſolved) will go,
And the ſame hand that bound ſhall ſet her free;
For, O! I fear 'tis wiſeſt ſtill through life
To keep our antient laws, and follow virtue.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Bacchus, by various names to mortals known,
Fair Semele's illuſtrious ſon.

Offspring

The ſame hand, &c. Creon, whoſe cruel nature was proof even againſt the remonſtrances of paternal affection, is intimidated by the heavy judgments denounced againſt him by the prophet; he goes out with a deſign to ſtop the execution of his ſentence againſt Antigone: this produces a new ſituation in the drama, and leaves the audience in ſuſpenſe concerning the cataſtrophe.

Bacchus, by various names, &c. This chorus may be conſidered as an image of the antient Greek tragedy, which, in its firſt rude ſtate, was no more than what we here meet with, a hymn to Bacchus. The old men, affrighted at the predictions of Tireſias denouncing miſery to Thebes, addreſs themſelves to that god as their tutelary deity: the whole ode is in the original to the laſt degree beautiful, and written with the true ſpirit and genius of antiquity.

Fair Semele's illuſtrious ſon, &c. Bacchus was generally reputed a Theban, and ſuppoſed by the poets to be the ſon of Jupiter, by

Offspring of thunder-bearing Jove,
Who honour'ſt famed Italia with thy love!
Who dwell'ſt where erſt the dragon's teeth were ſtrowed,
Or where Iſmenus pours his gentle flood;
Who doſt o'er Ceres' hallowed rites preſide,
And at thy native Thebes propitious ſtill reſide.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Where famed Parnaſſus' forked hills upriſe,
To thee aſcends the ſacrifice;
Corycia's nymphs attend below,
Whilſt from Caſtalia's fount freſh waters flow:
O'er Nyſa's mountains wreaths of ivy twine,
And mix their tendrils with the cluſtering vine:
Around their maſter crowd the virgin throng,
And praiſe the god of Thebes in never-dying ſong.

STROPHE II.

Happieſt of cities, Thebes! above the reſt
By Semele and Bacchus bleſt!
O! viſit now thy once beloved abode,
O! heal our woes, thou kind protecting god!
From ſteep Parnaſſus, or th' Eubæan ſea,
With ſmiles auſpicious come, and bring with thee

Semele, the daughter of Cadmus; he had ſeveral names, as Lyæus, Euius, Lenæus, Bromius, Eleleus, and many others. Italy is mentioned as his favourite country, on account of the number of vines growing there. He was worſhipped, together with Ceres, in the Eleuſinian myſteries.

Corycia's nymphs. The muſes, ſo called from Corycium, at the foot of mount Parnaſſus.

Nyſa's mountains. Parnaſſus is deſcribed by the poets as having two tops, one called Cirrha ſacred to Apollo, the other Nyſa, ſacred to Bacchus; there was alſo a city in Arcadia of this name, where Bacchus was nurſed.

Health, joy, and peace, and fair proſperity.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Immortal leader of the maddening choir,
Whoſe torches blaze with unextinguiſhed fire,
Great ſon of Jove, who guid'ſt the tuneful throng,
Thou, who preſideſt o'er the nightly ſong,
Come with thy Naxian maids, a feſtive train,
Who, wild with joy, and raging o'er the plain,
For thee the dance prepare, to thee devote the ſtrain.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

YE race of Cadmus, ſons of antient Thebes,
Henceforth no ſtate of human life by me
Shall be or valued or deſpiſed: for all
Depends on fortune; ſhe exalts the low,
And caſts the mighty down; the fate of men
Can never be foretold: there was a time
When Creon lived in envied happineſs,
Ruled o'er renowned Thebes, which from her foes
He had delivered, with ſucceſsful power;
Bleſt in his kingdom, in his children bleſt,
He ſtretched o'er all his univerſal ſway;
Now all is gone; when pleaſure is no more, Man

Naxian maids. Naxos was one of the Cyclades, iſlands in the Archipelago, famous for its vines: of the nymphs of Naxos, called Thyades, or Mænades, it is reported, that they ran wild and frantic about the woods, with each a torch, or thyrſus, in her hand, ſinging the praiſes of Bacchus; Sophocles calls them, therefore, μαινομεναι προσπωλοι, 'the maddening choir.'

When pleaſure is no more, &c. Athanæus will needs have it,

Man is but an animated corſe,
Nor can be ſaid to live; he may be rich,
Or decked with regal honours; but if joy
Be abſent from him, if he taſtes them not,
'Tis uſeleſs grandeur all, and empty ſhade.

CHO. Touching our royal maſter, bring'ſt thou news
Of ſorrow to us?

MES. They are dead; and thoſe
Who live, the dreadful cauſe.

CHO. Quick, tell us who,
The ſlayer and the ſlain.

MES. Hæmon is dead.

CHO. Dead! by what hand, his father's or his own?

MES. Enraged, and grieving for his murthered love,
He ſlew himſelf!

that on this ſentiment in Sophocles was founded the famous ſyſtem of Epicurus, which places the ſummum bonum, or chief good, in the enjoyment of pleaſure; but as he gives us no authority in ſupport of this opinion, we are not obliged to ſubſcribe to it.

They are dead. The moſt correct antient, tragic writers, probably the better to preſerve the unities, generally throw the principal circumſtances of the cataſtrophe into narration; the moderns, for reaſons ſufficiently obvious, bring the whole into action; much may be ſaid in defence of the methods uſed by both. Leaving this queſtion, therefore, to be determined by the critics, I ſhall only add, that in regard to the denouement of the Antigone, nothing can be more ſimple or natural, the conſequence of Creon's cruelty, and his too late repentance, brings on the death of Antigone, Hæmon, and Eurydice. Poetical juſtice is ſtrictly obſerved; the unfortunate Creon ſuffers as a king, as a huſband, and as a father; and, in ſpite of all his crimes, becomes an object of compaſſion. Thus terror and pity are both effectually raiſed, the one by his exemplary puniſhment, and the other by his unparalleled misfortunes.

CHO. O! prophet, thy predictions
Were but too true!
MES. Since thus it be, 'tis fit
We ſhould conſult; our preſent ſtate demands it.
CHO. But ſee, Eurydice, the wretched wife
Of Creon, comes this way; or chance hath brought her,
Or Hæmon's hapleſs fate, hath reached her ear.

Enter EURYDICE.

EUR. O! citizens, as to Minerva's fane
E'en now I went to pay my vows, the doors
I burſt, and heard imperfectly the ſound
Of moſt diſaſtrous news, which touched me near,
Breathleſs I fell amidſt the virgin throng,
And now I come to know the dreadful truth;
Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now; for, O!
I am no ſtranger to calamity.
MES. Then mark, my miſtreſs, I will tell thee all,
Nor will I paſs a circumſtance unmentioned:
Should I deceive thee with an idle tale,
'Twere ſoon diſcovered; truth is always beſt:
Know, then, I followed Creon to the field,
Where, torn by dogs, the wretched carcaſe lay
Of Polynices (firſt to Proſerpine
And angry Pluto, to appeaſe their wrath,

Our

O! citizens, &c. As the queen is going out to the temple of Minerva, ſhe opens the door, and overhears the meſſenger relating to the chorus the death of Hæmon; ſhe faints at the news, and as ſoon as recovered, entered with impatience to know the truth of it. Sophocles never brings his characters on the ſtage without ſome preparation, and a reaſon for their appearance there; a conduct which I would recommend to our modern dramatic writers for their imitation.

Our humble prayers addreſſing) there we laved
In the pure ſtream the body, then with leaves
Freſh gathered covering, burnt his poor remains,
And on the neighbouring turf a tomb upraiſed;
Then tow'rds the virgin's rocky cave advanced,
When, from the dreadful chamber, a ſad cry,
As from afar, was heard, a ſervant ran
To tell the king, and ſtill as we approached,
The ſound of ſorrow, from a voice unknown
And undiſtinguiſhed, iſſued forth. Alas!
Said Creon, am I then a faithful prophet?
And do I tread a more unhappy path
Than e'er I went before? It is my ſon,
I know his voice: but get ye to the door,
My ſervants, cloſe, look through the ſtony heap,
Mark if it be ſo: is it Hæmon's voice,
Again he cried, or have the gods deceived me?
Thus ſpoke the king: we, to our mournful lord
Obedient, looked, and ſaw Antigone
Down in the deepeſt hollow of the cave
By her own veſtments hung; cloſe by her ſide
The wretched youth, embracing in his arms
Her lifeleſs corſe, weeping his father's crime,
His raviſhed bride, and horrid nuptial bed;
Creon beheld, and loud approaching cried,
What art thou doing? what's thy dreadful purpoſe?
What means my ſon? come forth, my Hæmon, come,
Thy father begs thee: with indignant eye,
The youth looked up, nor ſcornful deigned an anſwer;
But ſilent drew his ſword, and with fell rage
Struck at his father, who by flight eſcaped
The blow; then on himſelf bent all his wrath,
Full in his ſide the weapon fixed, but ſtill,

Whilſt

Whilſt life remained, on the ſoft boſom hung
Of the dear maid, and his laſt ſpirit breathed
O'er her pale cheek, diſcoloured with his blood:
Thus lay the wretched pair, in death united,
And celebrate their nuptials in the tomb:
To future times a terrible example
Of the ſad woes which raſhneſs ever brings.

[*Exit* Eurydice.

CHO. What can this mean? ſhe's gone, without a word.

MES. 'Tis ſtrange, and yet I truſt ſhe will not loud
Proclaim her griefs to all, but, for I know
She's ever prudent, with her virgin train
In ſecret weep her murthered Hæmon's fate.

CHO. Clamour, indeed, were vain; but ſuch deep ſilence
Doth ever threaten horrid conſequence.

MES. Within we ſoon ſhall know, if aught ſhe hide
Of deadly purport in her angry ſoul;
For well thou ſay'ſt her ſilence is moſt dreadful.

[*Exit* Meſſenger.

CHO.

Whilſt life remained, &c. The death of the two lovers is finely deſcribed, and the circumſtance of it remarkably natural and affecting. I doubt whether Otway himſelf, with all his tenderneſs, could have drawn a more ſtriking picture.

She's gone, &c. The ſilence and departure of Eurydice, on hearing the news of her ſon's death, are extremely judicious, and more expreſſive of her feelings on the occaſion than words could poſſibly have made it, "curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes ſtupent." When Œdipus is diſcovered to be the murtherer of his father, Jocaſta acts in the ſame manner. A modern writer would, perhaps, have lengthened out this ſcene with complaints and declamation; but Sophocles (to ſpeak in the language of Shakeſpear) never o'erſteps the modeſty of nature; his faithful mirror reflects all her features without magnifying, diminiſhing, or diſtorting them.

CHO. But lo! the king himſelf, and in his arms
See his dead ſon, the monument accurſed
Of his ſad fate, which, may we ſay unblamed,
Sprang not from other's guilt, but from his own.

Enter CREON, bearing the body of Hæmon.

CRE. Ah me! what deadly woes from the bad mind
Perpetual flow; thus in one wretched houſe
Have you beheld the ſlayer and the ſlain!
O fatal counſels! O unhappy ſon!
Thus with thy youthful bride to ſink in death;
Thou dy'ſt, my child, and I alone have killed thee.

CHO. O king, thy juſtice comes too late.

CRE. It doth,
I know it well, unhappy as I am;
For O! the god this heavy weight of woe
Hath caſt upon me, and his fierceſt wrath
Torments me now, changing my joyful ſtate
To keeneſt anguiſh; O! the fruitleſs toils
Of wretched mortals!

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. Thus oppreſt, my lord,
With biteereſt misfortune, more affliction
Awaits thee ſtill, which thou wilt find within.

CRE. And can there be more woes? is aught to come
More horrible than this?

MES.

In his arms, &c. It is plain from theſe words, which are literally tranſlated from the original, that Creon enters bearing the body of his dead ſon. Sophocles, we may imagine, thought it would heighten the diſtreſs. Shakeſpear was of the ſame opinion, and brings in Lear with Cordelia in his arms; though in Tate's alteration of it, which is always ridiculouſly followed in the repreſentation, this circumſtance is omitted.

MES. The queen is dead;
Her wounds yet freſh, eager, alas! to ſhew
A mother's love, ſhe followed her loſt child,
CRE. O death inſatiate! how doſt thou afflict me!
What cruel news, thou meſſenger of ill,
Haſt thou brought now!
CHO. A wretch, already dead
With grief, thy horrid tale once more hath ſlain.
CRE. Didſt thou not ſay a freſh calamity
Had fallen upon me? didſt not ſay my wife
Was dead, alas! for grief of Hæmon's fate?
[Scene opens and diſcovers the body of Eurydice.]
MES. Behold her there.
CRE. O me! another blow!
What now remains? what can I ſuffer more,
Thus bearing in theſe arms my breathleſs ſon?
My wife too dead! O! moſt unhappy mother,
And O! thou wretched child!
MES. Cloſe by the altar
She drew the ſword, and cloſed her eyes in death,
Lamenting firſt her loſt Megareus' fate
And Hæmon's death, with imprecations dire
Still poured on thee, the murtherer of thy ſon.
CRE. I ſhudder at it: will no friendly hand
Deſtroy me quick? for O! I am moſt wretched;
Beſet with miſeries!
MES. She accuſed thee oft,
And ſaid the guilt of both their deaths was thine.
CRE. Alas! I only am to blame; 'twas I
Who killed thee, Hæmon; I confeſs my crime;
Bear me, my ſervants, bear me far from hence,
For I am——nothing. CHO.

Megareus' fate. Megareus was the firſt huſband of Eurydice.

CHO. If in ills like theſe
Aught can be well, thou haſt determined right:
When leaſt we ſee our woes, we feel them leaſt.
CRE. Quick let my laſt, my happieſt, hour appear;
Would it were come, the period of my woes!
O! that I might not ſee another day!
CHO. Time muſt determine that: the preſent hour
Demands our care; the reſt be left to heaven.
CRE. But I have wiſhed and prayed for't.
CHO. Pray for nothing;
There's no reverſing the decrees of fate.
CRE. Take hence this uſeleſs load, this guilty wretch
Who ſlew his child, who ſlew e'en thee, my wife;
I know not whither to betake me, where
To turn my eyes, for all is dreadful round me,
And fate hath weighed me down on every ſide.
CHO. Wiſdom alone is man's true happineſs;
We are not to diſpute the will of heaven;
For ever are the boaſtings of the proud
By the juſt gods repaid, and man at laſt
Is taught to fear their anger, and be wiſe.

And man, &c. This moral reflection, naturally ariſing from the action of the drama, concludes the tragedy of Antigone; a piece, which, for the conduct of its plot, the juſtneſs of its characters, and the propriety of its ſentiments and expreſſions, cannot be too much admired. That ſimplicity, and want of incidents, which modern critics may condemn, were probably among thoſe beauties which recommended it to the favour of antiquity: it met with remarkable ſucceſs on the Athenian ſtage, having been repreſented there (according to Ariſtophanes the grammarian) two and thirty times, and was looked on as ſo conſiderable a teſtimony of the author's merit, as to procure for him, in reward, the government of Samos.

FINIS.

TRACHINIÆ.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HERCULES.
HYLLUS, his ſon.
DEIANIRA, wife of HERCULES.
LICHAS, a Herald.
ATTENDANT on DEIANIRA.
NURSE.
OLD MAN.
MESSENGER.

CHORUS.
Compoſed of VIRGINS of TRACHIS.

SCENE before the palace of CEYX, in Trachis.

TRACHINIÆ.

ACT I.

DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

DEIANIRA.

OF antient fame, and long for truth received,
Hath been the maxim, that nor good nor ill
Can mortal life be called, before we die:
Alas! it is not ſo; for O! my friends,
Ere to the ſhades of Orcus I deſcend,
Too well I know that Deianira's life
Hath ever been, and ever muſt be, wretched:
Whilſt in my native Pleuron, Æneus watched
My tender years with kind, paternal care,
If ever woman ſuffered from the dread
Of hated nuptials, I endured the worſt

Trachiniæ. The titles of the antient tragedies were uſually given them either from the perſons concerned, the buſineſs of the drama, or the place where it was tranſacted: the Trachiniæ is ſo called from Trachis, a ſmall country of Phthiotis, in Theſſaly: to this place Deianira had accompanied Hercules in his voluntary baniſhment, and remained under the protection of Ceyk, the king, during the abſence of her huſband on his expedition to Œchalia.

Nor good nor ill, &c. This obſervation is generally attributed to Solon, who lived long after Deianira; Sophocles is therefore here accuſed of an anachroniſm; but as the remark is no leſs obvious than true, we need not be ſurpriſed to find it quoted as proverbial, even in the earlieſt ages.

Pleuron. A city of Ætolia, and the reſidence of Æneus, king of that country, and father of Deianira.

And bittereſt woes, when Achelous came,
The river-god, to aſk a father's voice,
And ſnatched me to his arms; with triple form
He came affrighting; now, to ſight appeared
A bull, and now, with motley ſcales adorned,
A wreathed ſerpent, now with human ſhape
And beſtial head united; from his beard,
Shadowed with hair, as from a fountain, dripped
The over-flowing water; horrid form!
This to eſcape, my prayers inceſſant roſe,
That I might rather die than e'er approach
His hated bed; when, lo! the welcome hour,
Though late, arrived, that brought the ſon of Jove
And fair Alcmena to my aid; he came,
He fought, he freed me; how the battle paſſed,
Who unconcerned beheld it beſt can tell;
Alas! I ſaw it not, oppreſt with fear,
Leſt from my fatal beauty ſhould ariſe
Some ſad event; at length, deciding Jove
Gave to the doubtful fight a happy end,
If I may call it ſo; for, ſince the hour
That gave me to Alcides' wiſhed-for bed,
Fears riſe on fears; ſtill is my anxious heart
Solicitous for him; oft'times the night, Which

Achelous. A famous river, ariſing out of mount Pindus, and dividing Ætolia from Acarnania; the fabulous account of his perſon and powers, is received by the antient poets, and explained by the mythologiſts; for a full detail of this extraordinary courtſhip, the reader may turn to the inſtructive Ovid. See Met. b. 9.

Oft'times the night, &c. Ovid had probably this paſſage of Sophocles before him, when he wrote the following lines in his epiſtle from Deianira to Hercules.

Vir mihi ſemper abeſt, & conjuge notior hoſpes,
Monſtraque, terribiles perſequiturque feras;

Which brings him to me, bears him from my arms
To other labours, and a ſecond toil:
Our children too, alas! he ſees them not,
But as the huſbandman who ne'er beholds
His diſtant lands, ſave at the needful time
Of ſeed or harveſt; wandering thus, and thus
Returning ever, is he ſent to ſerve
I know not whom; when crowned with victory,
Then moſt my fears prevail; for ſince he ſlew

Ipſa domo vacua votis operata pudicis
Torqueor, infeſto ne vir ab hoſte cadat;
Inter ſerpentes, aproſque avidoſque leones
Jactor, & eſuros terna per ora canes.

See Ep. 9.

I know not whom. Probably Euryſtheus, king of Mycenæ.

Duris mille labores
Rege ſub Euryſtheo, fatis junonis iniquæ,
Pertulit. VIRG. Æn. 7.

The fates having, it ſeems, decreed, before the birth of Hercules and Euryſtheus, that the firſt born of them ſhould rule over the other, the implacable Juno, who was reſolved to revenge the infidelity of Jupiter on his offspring, contrived (no very difficult matter indeed for the goddeſs of child-birth) to bring Euryſtheus into the world firſt, who accordingly took the lead, made uſe of his privilege, and impoſed on the noble Hercules what taſks he thought proper: for an account of his moſt diſtinguiſhed labours, my readers may turn to the faithful chronicles of Ovid. See Met. b. 9.

Since he ſlew, &c. Iphitus (as the ſtory is told by Homer, in the Odyſſey) was the ſon of Eurytus, and ſlain by Hercules, who, being a gueſt at his court, broke through the laws of hoſpitality, and murthered the young prince, in order to poſſeſs himſelf of ſome beautiful mares, which, after the commiſſion of this fact, he

The valiant Iphitus, at Trachis here
We live in exile with our generous friend,
The hoſpitable Ceyx; he, mean time,
Is gone, and none can tell me where; he went
And left me moſt unhappy; O! ſome ill
Hath ſure befallen him! for no little time
Hath he been abſent; 'tis full fifteen moons
Since I beheld him, and no meſſenger
Is come to Deianira; ſome misfortune
Doubtleſs hath happened, for he left behind
A dreadful ſcroll: O! I have prayed the gods
A thouſand times it may contain no ill.

ATT. My royal miſtreſs, long have I beheld
Thy tears and ſorrows for thy loſt Alcides;
But if the counſels of a ſlave might claim
Attention, I would ſpeak, would aſk thee wherefore

Amongſt

took away with him: Sophocles, as we ſhall find in the ſecond act, has varied this circumſtance.

According to Brumoy, who takes it from the commentators, the perſon ſlain by Hercules was a young man, a relation of Æneus, our hero's father-in-law; the murther was by a caſual blow, and unpremeditated: Hercules, notwithſtanding, according to the cuſtom of his country, ſubmitted to a voluntary baniſhment, for one year, having conducted Deianira and his family to Trachis, and committed them to the care of Ceyx, as mentioned by Heſiod:

Τρηχινα δε τοι παρελαυνων
Ες κηυκα ανακτα———

My royal miſtreſs, &c. The firſt introduction of confidantes on the ſtage, has by ſome been attributed to the French writers; the ſcene before us is, however, a proof that it is of much more antient original: in the moderns it is perhaps more excuſable, becauſe the chorus of the Greeks ſeems to have rendered it altogether unneceſſary.

Amongſt thy ſons, a numerous progeny,
None hath been ſent in ſearch of him, and chief
Thy Hyllus, if he holds a father's health
And ſafety dear: but, e'en as we could wiſh,
Behold him here, if what I have adviſed
Seem fitting he is come in happieſt hour
To execute our purpoſe.

Enter HYLLUS.

DEI. O! my ſon,
Oft from the meaneſt tongue the words of truth
And ſafety flow; this woman, though a ſlave,
Hath ſpoke what would have well become the mouth
Of freedom's ſelf to utter.

HYL. May I know
What ſhe hath ſaid?

DEI. She ſays it doth reflect
Diſgrace on thee, thy father ſo long abſent,
Not to have gained ſome knowledge of his fate.

HYL. I have already, if I may rely
On what report hath ſaid of him.

DEI. O! where,
Where is he then, my ſon?

HYL. Theſe twelve months paſt,
If fame ſay true, a Lydian woman held him
In ſhameful ſervitude.

DEI. If it be ſo,
May every tongue reproach him!

HYL. But I hear
He now is free.

DEI. And where doth rumour ſay
He is? alive or dead?

HYL. 'Tis ſaid, he leads,
Or means to lead, his forces towards Eubœa,
The land of Eurytus.

DEI.

DEI. Aalas! my ſon,
Doſt thou not know the oracles he left
Touching that kingdom?

HYL. No, I know not of them;
What were they?

DEI. There, he ſaid, or he ſhould die,
Or, if he ſhould ſurvive, his life to come
Would all be happy: wilt thou not, my ſon,
In this important criſis, ſtrive to aid
Thy father? if he lives, we too ſhall live
In ſafety: if he dies, we periſh with him.

HYL. Mother, I go; long ſince I had been there,
But that the oracle did never reach
Mine ears before; mean time, that happy fate,
Which on my father ever wont to ſmile
Propitious, ſhould not ſuffer us to fear;
Thus far informed, I will not let the means
Of truth eſcape me, but will know it all.

DEI. Haſte then away, my ſon, and know, good deeds,
Though late performed, are crowned with ſure ſucceſs.

[*Exit* Hyllus.

Enter CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

On thee we call, great god of day,

To

On thee we call, &c. This is the firſt appearance of the chorus, compoſed moſt properly of the principal virgins of Trachis, who come in to condole with the afflicted Deianira, and offer up a beautiful addreſs to Apollo, in which are intermixed, according to the cuſtom of the antients, moral reflections on the inſtability of human affairs. The whole ſong naturally ariſes from the circumſtances of the drama, and is, according to Horace's rule, of a piece with the buſineſs of it.

To whom the night, with all her ſtarry train,
Yields her ſolitary reign,
To ſend us ſome propitious ray:
Say thou, whoſe all-beholding eye
Doth nature's every part deſcry,
What dangerous ocean, or what land unknown
From Deianira keeps Alcmena's valiant ſon!

ANTISTROPHE I.

For ſhe nor joy nor comfort knows,
But weeps her abſent lord, and vainly tries
To cloſe her ever-ſtreaming eyes,
Or ſooth her ſorrows to repoſe:
Like the ſad bird of night, alone
She makes her ſolitary moan;
And ſtill, as on her widowed bed reclined
She lies, unnumbered fears perplex her anxious mind.

STROPHE II.

E'en as the troubled billows roar,
When angry Boreas rules the inclement ſkies,
And waves on waves tumultuous riſe
To laſh the Cretan ſhore:
Thus ſorrows ſtill on ſorrows preſt,
Fill the great Alcides' breaſt;
Unfading yet ſhall his fair virtues bloom,
And ſome protecting god preſerve him from the tomb.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Wherefore, to better thoughts inclined
Let us with hope's fair proſpect fill thy breaſt,
Calm thy anxious thoughts to reſt,
And eaſe thy troubled mind:
No bliſs on man, unmixed with woe,
Doth Jove, great lord of all, beſtow;
But good with ill, and pleaſure ſtill with pain,
Like heaven's revolving ſigns, alternate reign.

EPODE.

Not always do the ſhades of night remain,
Nor ever with hard fate is man oppreſt;
The wealth that leaves us may return again,
Sorrow and joy ſucceſſive fill the breaſt;
Fearleſs then of every ill,
Let chearful hope ſupport thee ſtill:
Remember, queen, there is a power above;
And when did the great father, careful Jove,
Forget his children dear, and kind paternal love?

DEI. The fame, it ſeems, of Deianira's woes
Hath reached thine ears, but, O! thou little know'ſt
What I have ſuffered; thou haſt never felt
Sorrows like mine; and long may be the time
E'er ſad experience ſhall afflict thy ſoul
With equal woes! alas! the youthful maid
In flowery paſtures ſtill exulting feeds,
Nor feels the ſcorching ſun, the wintery ſtorm,
Or blaſt of angry winds; ſecure ſhe leads
A life of pleaſure, void of every care,
Till to the virgin's happy ſtate ſucceeds
The name of wife; then ſhall her portion come
Of pain and anguiſh, then her terrors riſe
For huſband and for children; then perchance
You too may know what 'tis to be unhappy,
And judge of my misfortunes by your own.
Long ſince oppreſt by many a bitter woe,
Oft have I wept, but this tranſcends them all;
For I will tell thee, when Alcides laſt

Forth

The youthful maid, &c. Horace has caught this image:

Quæ, velut latis equa trima campis,
Ludit exultim, metuitque tangi,
Nuptiarum expers. Book 3, Od. 11.

Forth on his journey went, he left behind
An antient ſcroll; alas! before that time
In all his labours he did never uſe
To ſpeak as one who thought of death, ſecure
Always he ſeemed of victory, but now
This writing marks as if he were to die,
The portion out reſerved for me, and wills
His children to divide th' inheritance;
Fixes the time, in fifteen moons, it ſays,
He ſhould return; that paſt, or he muſt periſh,
Or, if he 'ſcape the fatal hour, thenceforth
Should lead a life of happineſs and joy:
Thus had the gods, it ſaid, decreed, his life
And toil ſhould end; ſo from their antient beach
Dodona's doves foretold: th' appointed hour
Approaches that muſt bring th' event, e'en now,
My friends, and therefore nightly do I ſtart
From my ſweet ſlumbers, ſtruck with deadly fear,
Leſt I ſhould loſe the deareſt, beſt, of men.

CHO.

Dodona's doves. At Dodona, a city of Chaonia in Epirus, was a temple, dedicated to Jupiter Dodoneus, and in a grove near it a beach-tree, on which two doves ſat and propheſied: the ſcholiaſt, in this place, turns the doves into old women, becauſe the word πελειαι is not far from πελιοι, and therefore may ſignify grey: the opinion of Euſtathius is rather more rational, who ſuppoſes theſe doves to have been the prieſteſſes of Jupiter, and ſo called, becauſe they made their predictions by the obſervation of thoſe birds; a much better conceit than that of Herodotus, who very gravely aſſures us, that the old women were called doves, becauſe their language was barbarous, and as unintelligible as that of birds; and for the ſame reaſon they might as well have been called partridges or quails.

CHO. Of better omen be thy words; behold
A meſſenger, who bears (for on his brow
I ſee the laurel crown) ſome joyful news

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. I come, my royal miſtreſs, to remove
Thy fears, and bring the firſt glad tidings to thee,
To tell thee that Alcmena's ſon returns
With life and victory; e'en now he comes
To lay before his country's gods the ſpoils
Of glorious war.

DEI. What doſt thou ſay, old man?
What doſt thou tell me?

MES. That thy dear Alcides,
Thy valiant lord, with his victorious bands,
Will ſoon attend thee.

DEI. From our citizens
Didſt thou learn this, or from a ſtranger's tongue?

MES. The herald Lichas, in yon flowery vale,
But now reported, and I fled impatient
Soon as I heard it, that I firſt might tell thee
And be rewarded for the welcome tale.

DEI. But wherefore tarries Lichas, if he bring
Glad tidings to me?

MES. 'Tis impoſſible
To reach thee, for the Melian people throng
Around him, not a man but longs to know
Some news of thy Alcides, ſtops his journey,
Nor will releaſe him till he hear it all;
Spite of himſelf he waits to ſatisfy
Their eager doubts; but thou wilt ſee him ſoon.

DEI. O! thou, who dwell'ſt on Œta's ſacred top,
Immortal Jove! at length, though late, thou giv'ſt
The wiſhed-for boon; let every female now,

You

You that within the palace do reſide,
And you, my followers here, with ſhouts proclaim
The bleſt event! for, lo! a beam of joy,
I little hoped, breaks forth, and we are happy.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Quick let ſounds of mirth and joy
Every chearful hour employ;
Haſte, and join the feſtive ſong,
You, who lead the youthful throng,
On whom the ſmiles of proſperous fate,
And Hymen's promiſed pleaſures wait,
Now all your Io Pæan's ſing,
To Phœbus, your protector and your king.

ANTISTROPHE.

And you, ye virgin train, attend,
Not unmindful of your friend,
His ſiſter huntreſs of the groves,
Who ſtill her native Delos loves,
Prepare the dance and choral lays,
To hymn the chaſte Diana's praiſe;
To her, and her attendant choir
Of mountain-nymphs, attune the votive lyre.

EPODE.

Quick let ſounds, &c. This ſecond ſong of the chorus is a hymn of thankſgiving to Apollo and Diana. Deianira, on the agreeable news of her huſband's arrival, calls together her friends and ſervants to partake of her happineſs; it was probably accompanied both with muſic and dancing, ad tibiam, ſays Camerarius, choream agitatam apparet; I have endeavoured to adapt the Engliſh meaſure to the feſtivity of the ſubject: thoſe who contend for the diviſion into acts, as parted by the ſongs of the chorus, will pleaſe to remember this is the ſecond intermede.

EPODE.

Already hath the god poſſeſſed
My ſoul, and rules the ſovereign of my breaſt;
Evoe, Bacchus! Io! I come to join
Thy throng; around me doth the Thyrſus twine,
And I am filled with rage divine;
See! the glad meſſenger appears
To calm thy doubts, and to remove thy fears;
Let us our Io Pæan's ſing.
To Phœbus, our protector and our king.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

THESE eyes deceive me, friends, or I behold
A crowd approach this way, and with them comes
The herald Lichas: let me welcome him,
If he bring joyful news.

Enter LICHAS, IOLE, SLAVES.

LIC. My royal miſtreſs,
We greet thee with fair tidings of ſucceſs,
And therefore ſhall our words deſerve thy praiſe.

DEI. O! thou dear meſſenger, inform me firſt
What firſt I wiſh to know, my loved Alcides,
Doth he yet live, ſhall I again behold him?

LIC. I left him well; in health and manly ſtrength
Exulting.

DEI.

Sovereign of my breaſt. Almoſt a literal tranſlation of 'Τυραννος ἐμας φρενος,' 'tyrant of my ſoul;' an expreſſion which carries with it a remarkably modern air, and much in the ſtile of our dramatic lovers.

DEI. Where? in his own native land,
Or 'midſt barbarians?
LIC. On Eubœa's ſhore
He waits, with various fruits to crown the altar,
And pay due honours to Cenæan Jove.
DEI. Commanded by ſome oracle divine
Performs he this, or means but to fulfil
A vow of gratitude for conqueſt gained?
LIC. For victory o'er the land, whence we have brought
Theſe captive women, whom thou ſeeſt before thee.
DEI. Whence come the wretched ſlaves; for, if I judge
Their ſtate aright, they muſt indeed be wretched.
LIC. Know, when Alcides had laid waſte the city
Of Eurytus, to him and to the gods
Were theſe devoted.
DEI. In Oechalia then
Hath my Alcides been this long, long time?
LIC. Not ſo: in Lydia (as himſelf reports)
Was he detained a ſlave; ſo Jove ordained:
And who ſhall blame the high decrees of Jove?
Sold to barbarian Omphale, he ſerved

Twelve

Cenæan Jove. So called from Cenæum, a promontory, in Eubœa, where altars were raiſed, and ſacrifice offered up to him. The heathens, after victory, never omitted paying their grateful acknowledgments to the ſupreme power: though miſtaken in the object of their worſhip, they are, perhaps, not unworthy of our imitation in their punctual and devout performance of it.

Omphale. A queen of Lydia. Hercules, who, like many other heroes, was a dupe to women, became ſo enamoured of her as to ſubmit to every taſk which ſhe thought proper to impoſe on him; ſhe found him a willing ſlave, and treated him accordingly, put a diſtaff in his hands, and ſent him to ſpin with her maids. This fact, according to general tradition, was prior to his marriage

Twelve tedious months; ill brooked he the foul ſhame;
Then in his wrath he made a ſolemn vow
He would revenge the wrong on the baſe author,
And bind in chains his wife and all his race:
Nor fruitleſs the reſolve, for when the year
Of ſlavery paſt had expiated the crime
Imputed, ſoon with gathered force he marched
'Gainſt the devoted Eurytus, the cauſe
(For ſo he deemed him) of thoſe hateful bonds;
Within his palace he had erſt received
Alcides, but with bittereſt taunts reviled him,
Boaſting, in ſpite of his all-conquering arrows,
His ſon's ſuperior ſkill, and ſaid, a ſlave
Like him ſhould bend beneath a freeman's power;
Then 'midſt the banquet's mirth, inflamed with wine,
Caſt forth his ancient gueſt; this to revenge
When Iphitus to ſearch his paſtured ſteeds
Came to Tyrinthia, Hercules ſurpriſed;
And, as he turned his wandering eyes aſide,
Hurled head-long from the mountain's top; great Jove,
Father of men, from high Olympus, ſaw
And diſapproved the deed, unworthy him

Who

with Deianira: Sophocles, however, has taken the poetical liberty to change the time as moſt agreeable to his purpoſe. Lichas ſoftens the matter to Deianira, and makes it an involuntary ſervitude; though he well knew that his maſter had in reality ſold himſelf. He calls her barbarian Omphale, becauſe the Greeks looked on all nations but themſelves as ſuch.

Hurled headlong, &c. 'It is ſurpriſing (ſays Brumoy) that 'Sophocles ſhould impute ſuch an action to his hero, even in an 'account that is afterwards found to be fictitious.' But the French critic forgets that he had a foundation for this ſtory in Homer, as we obſerved in a former note.

Who ne'er before, by fraud, deſtroyed his foes;
With open force had he revenged the wrong,
Jove had forgiven, but violence concealed
The gods abhor, and therefore was he ſold
To ſlavery; Eurytus's unhappy ſons
Were puniſhed too, and dwell in Erebus;
Their city is deſtroyed, and they, whom here
Thou ſeeſt, from freedom and proſperity,
Reduced to wretchedneſs; to thee they come,
Such was Alcides' will; which I, his ſlave,
Have faithfully performed; himſelf ere long
Thou ſhalt behold, when to paternal Jove
He hath fulfilled his vows: thus my long tale
Ends with the welcom'ſt news which thou couldſt hear,
Alcides comes!

CHO. O! queen, thy happineſs
Is great indeed, to ſee theſe ſlaves before thee,
And know thy lord approaches.

DEI. I am happy:
To ſee my Hercules with victory crowned,
'Tis fit I ſhould rejoice; and yet, my friends,
If we conſider well, we ſtill ſhould fear
For the ſucceſsful, leſt they fall from bliſs.
It moves my pity much when I behold
Theſe wretched captives in a foreign land,
Without a parent, and without a home,
Thus doomed to ſlavery here, who once perhaps
Enjoyed fair freedom's beſt inheritance;
O! Jove, averter of each mortal ill,
Let not my children ever feel thy arm
Thus raiſed againſt them! or, if 'tis decreed,
Let it not be whilſt Deianira lives:
The ſight of theſe alarms my fears: but tell me,

Thou

Thou poor afflicted captive, who thou art; [to Iole.
Art thou a mother? or, as by thy years
Thou ſeem'ſt, a virgin, and of noble birth?
Canſt not thou tell me, Lichas, whence ſhe ſprang?
Inform me, for, of all theſe ſlaves, ſhe moſt
Hath won my pity; and in her alone
Have I obſerved a firm and generous mind.

LIC. Why aſk of me? I know not who ſhe is;
Perhaps of no mean rank.

DEI. The royal race
Of Eurytus?

LIC. I know not, nor did e'er
Inquire.

DEI. And didſt thou never hear her name
From her companions?

LIC. Never. I performed
My work in ſilence.

DEI. Tell me then thyſelf,
Thou wretched maid, for I am moſt unhappy
Till I know who thou art.

LIC. She will not ſpeak;
I know ſhe will not; not a word hath paſt
Her lips, e'er ſince ſhe left her native land,
But ſtill in tears the hapleſs virgin mourns
The burthen of her ſad calamity;
Her fate is hard: ſhe merits your forgiveneſs. DEI.

She will not ſpeak. Nothing can be better imagined, or more, artfully contrived, than the concern which Deianira expreſſes for Iole: the youth, beauty, and modeſty of the fair captive plead ſtrongly in her behalf, and the queen is, as it were, enamoured of her rival. She is anxious to know who and what ſhe is; but Iole, whoſe buſineſs it was to conceal herſelf, remains ſilent. Caſſandra behaves in the ſame manner with regard to Clytæmneſtra, in the Agamemnon of Æſchylus.

DEI. Let her go in: I'll not diſturb her peace,
Nor would I heap freſh ſorrows on her head,
She hath enough already: we'll retire.
Go where thou wilt; my cares within await me. [to Iole.
[*Exeunt* Lichas, Iole, and ſlaves.

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. Stay thee awhile. I have a tale to tell
Touching theſe captives, which imports thee nearly,
And I alone am able to inform thee.

DEI. What doſt thou know? and why wouldſt thou detain [me?

MES. Return, and hear me? when I ſpake before
I did not ſpeak in vain, nor ſhall I now.

DEI. Wouldſt thou I call them back, or mean'ſt to tell
Thy ſecret purpoſe here to me alone?

MES. To thee, and theſe thy friends, no more.

DEI. They're gone;
Now ſpeak in ſafety.

MES. Lichas is diſhoneſt,
And, either now or when I ſaw him laſt,
Hath uttered falſhood.

DEI. Ha! what doſt thou ſay?
I underſtand thee not, explain it quickly.

MES. I heard him ſay, before attendant crowds,
It was this virgin, this fair ſlave, deſtroyed
Œchalia's lofty towers, 'twas love alone
That waged the war, no Lydian ſervitude,
Nor Omphale, nor the pretended fall

Stay thee awhile. This is the ſame meſſenger who appeared in the firſt act, to announce the arrival of Lichas: he is moved by the unhappy ſituation of Deianira, and ſtops her, as ſhe is going out, to diſcloſe the ſecret to her, and acquaint her with the treachery of Lichas.

Of Iphitus (for ſo the tale he brings
Would fain perſuade thee) know, thy own Alcides,
For that he could not gain th' aſſenting voice
Of Eurytus to his unlawful love,
Laid waſte the city where her father reigned,
And ſlew him; now the daughter, as a ſlave,
Is ſent to thee; the reaſon is too plain,
Nor think he meant her for a ſlave alone,
The maid he loves, that would be ſtrange indeed;
My royal miſtreſs, moſt unwillingly
Do I report th' unwelcome news, but thought
It was my duty: I have told thee truth,
And the Trachinians bear me witneſs of it.

DEI. Wretch that I am! to what am I reſerved?
What hidden peſtilence within my roof
Have I received unknowing! hapleſs woman!
She ſeemed of beauteous form and noble birth;
Have you not heard her name? for Lichas ſaid
He knew it not.

MES. Daughter of Eurytus,
Her name Iole; he had not enquired
Touching her race.

CHO. Perdition on the man,
Of all moſt wicked, who hath thus deceived thee!

DEI. What's to be done, my friend? this dreadful news
Afflicts me ſorely.

CHO. Go, and learn the whole
From his own lips, compel him to declare
The truth.

DEI.

Perdition on the man, &c. The chorus here throws an oblique reflection on Hercules, for his falſhood to Deianira; though it is ſo worded, probably with a purpoſed ambiguity, as to be applicable to the herald Lichas.

DEI. I will; thou counſel'ſt me aright.
CHO. Shall we attend you?
DEI. No; for ſee he comes
Uncalled.

Enter LICHAS, ATTENDANT.

LIC. O! queen, what are thy laſt commands
To thy Alcides? for e'en now I go
To meet him.
DEI. Haſt thou ta'en ſo long a journey
To Trachis, and wouldſt now ſo ſoon return,
Ere I can hold ſome further converſe with thee?
LIC. If thou wouldſt queſtion me of aught, behold me
Ready to tell thee.
DEI. Wilt thou tell me truth?
LIC. In all I know; ſo bear me witneſs, Jove!
DEI. Who is that woman thou haſt brought?
LIC. I hear
She's of Eubœa: for her race and name,
I know them not.
DEI. Look on me; who am I?
LIC. Why aſk me this?
DEI. Be bold, and anſwer me.
LIC. Daughter of Æneus, wife of Hercules,
If I am not deceived, 'tis Deianira,
My queen, my miſtreſs. DEI.

O! queen, &c. The meſſenger's information having made the preſence of Lichas on the ſtage immediately neceſſary, he is introduced, with propriety, to take his leave of Deianira, who embraces this opportunity to ſound him with regard to the accuſation, which ſhe does with all the ſubtlety of a woman, and all the dignity of a queen, uſing every artifice to draw him into a confeſſion, and at laſt perſuading him to it, by an affected indifference about her huſband's fidelity.

If I am not deceived. This may, perhaps, appear odd to the

DEI. Am I ſo indeed?
Am I thy miſtreſs?
LIC. Doubtleſs.
DEI. Why, 'tis well
Thou doſt confeſs it: then what puniſhment
Wouldſt thou deſerve, if thou wert faithleſs to her?
LIC. How faithleſs? mean'ſt thou to betray me?
DEI. No:
The fraud is thine.
LIC. 'Twas folly thus to ſtay
And hear thee; I muſt hence.
DEI. Thou ſhalt not go
Till I have aſked thee one ſhort queſtion.
LIC. Aſk it,
For ſo it ſeems thou art reſolved.
DEI. Inform me;
This captive, doſt thou know her?
LIC. I have told thee;
What wouldſt thou more?
DEI. Didſt thou not ſay, this ſlave,
Though now, it ſeems, thou know'ſt her not, was daughter
Of Eurytus, her name Iole?
LIC. Where?
To whom did I ſay this? what witneſs have you?
DEI. Aſſembled multitudes; the citizens
Of Trachis heard thee.

LIC.

Engliſh reader, but it is almoſt a literal tranſlation of the original, 'ει μη κυρων λευκω ματαια,' 'niſi perperam video, niſi oculi me 'falluni.'

For ſo it ſeems. The Greek is, υ σιγηλος ει, 'you are not very 'ſilent, or, not much given to ſilence;' a kind of impertinent familiarity from a ſervant to a miſtreſs, which modern delicacy would ſcarce admit; I have, therefore, ſoftened it a little in the tranſlation.

LIC. They might ſay they heard
Reports like theſe; but muſt it therefore ſeem
A truth undoubted?

DEI. Seem! didſt thou not ſwear
That thou hadſt brought this woman to partake
The bed of my Alcides?

LIC. Did I ſay ſo?
But tell me who this ſtranger is.

DEI. The man
Who heard thee ſay, Alcides' love for her,
And not the Lydian, laid the city waſte.

LIC. Let him come forth, and prove it; 'tis no mark
Of wiſdom thus to trifle with th' unhappy.

DEI. O! do not, I beſeech thee, by that power
Whoſe thunders roll o'er Œta's lofty grove,
Do not conceal the truth; thou ſpeak'ſt to one
Not unexperienced in the ways of men;
To one who knows we cannot always joy
In the ſame object: 'tis an idle taſk
To take up arms againſt all-powerful love;
Love which commands the gods; love conquered me,
And wherefore ſhould it not ſubdue another,
Whoſe nature and whoſe paſſions are the ſame?
If my Alcides is indeed oppreſt
With this ſad malady, I blame him not;
That were a folly; nor this hapleſs maid,
Who meant no ill, no injury to me;
'Tis not for this I ſpeak; but, mark me well,

This ſtranger. It is plain, from hence, that the meſſenger who had accuſed Lichas, remains on the ſtage during all this ſcene; Lichas bids him ſtand forth, and make good his charge; Deianira prevents him, and takes a better method to bring him to confeſſion.

If thou wert taught by him to utter falſhood,
A vile and ſhameful leſſon didſt thou learn;
And if thou art thy own inſtructor, know,
Thou ſhalt ſeem wicked e'en when moſt ſincere,
And never be believed; ſpeak then the truth;
For to be branded with the name of liar,
Is ignominy fit for ſlaves alone,
And not for thee; nor think thou canſt conceal it;
Thoſe who have heard the tale, will tell it me:
If fear deters thee, thou haſt little cauſe;
For to ſuſpect his falſhood, is my grief;
To know it, none; already have I ſeen
Alcides' heart eſtranged to other loves,
Yet did no rival ever hear from me
One bitter word, nor will I now reproach
This wretched ſlave, e'en though ſhe pines for him
With ſtrongeſt love: alas! I pity her,
Whoſe beauty thus hath been the fatal cauſe
Of all her miſery, laid her country waſte,
And brought her here, far from her native land,
A helpleſs captive: but no more of this;
Only remember, if thou muſt be falſe,
Be falſe to others, but be true to me.

CHO. She ſpeaks moſt kindly to thee; be perſuaded;
Hereafter thou ſhalt find her not ungrateful:
We too will thank thee.

LIC. O! my deareſt miſtreſs,
Not unexperienced thou in human life,
Nor ignorant; and therefore nought from thee
Will I conceal, but tell thee all the truth:
'Tis as he ſaid; and Hercules, indeed,
Doth love Iole: for her ſake alone,
Œchalia, her unhappy country, fell;

This

This (for 'tis fit I tell thee) he confeſt,
Nor will'd me to conceal it; but I feared
'Twould pierce thy heart to hear th' unwelcome tale,
And therefore own, I would have kept it from thee;
That crime, if ſuch it was, I have committed;
But ſince thou know'ſt it all, let me entreat thee,
For her ſake, and thy own, O! do not hate
This wretched captive, but remember well,
What thou haſt promiſed, faithfully perform:
He whoſe victorious arm hath conquered all,
Now yields to her, and is a ſlave to love.

DEI. 'Tis my reſolve to act as thou adviſeſt;
I'll not reſiſt the gods, nor add freſh weight
To my calamity: let us go in,
That thou mayſt bear my orders to Alcides,
And, with them, gifts, in kind return for thoſe
We have received from him; thou muſt not hence
With empty hand, who hither brought'ſt to me
Such noble preſents, and ſo fair a train. [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Thee, Venus, gods and men obey,
And univerſal is thy ſway;
Need I recount the powers ſubdued by love?

He whoſe victorious arm, &c.

Quem nunquam Juno ſerieſque immenſa laborum,
Fregerit, huic Iolen impoſuiſſe jugum. Ovid.

Thee, Venus, &c. This is the third intermede, or ſong of the chorus: my female readers will pleaſe to obſerve, that the gallant Sophocles has here given us another ode to love, which naturally introduces an account of the combat of Hercules and Achelous, for Deianira, the heroine of the drama.

Neptune, who ſhakes the ſolid ground,
The king of Erebus profound,
Or the great lord of all, ſaturnian Jove?
To mortals let the ſong deſcend,
To pity our afflicted friend,
And ſooth the injured Deianira's woes:
For her, the angry rivals came,
For her they felt an equal flame,
For her, behold! the doubtful battle glows.

ANTISTROPHE.

In dreadful majeſty arrayed,
Affrighting ſore the fearful maid,
Up roſe the horned monarch of the flood;
He who through fair Ætolia's plain
Pours his rich tribute to the main;
A bull's tremendous form belied the god;
From his own Thebes, to win her love,
With him the happier ſon of Jove,
The great Alcides came, and in his hand
The club, the bow, and glittering ſpear;
Whilſt Venus, to her votaries near,
Waved o'er their heads her all-deciding wand.

EPODE.

Warm, and more warm, the conflict grows,
Dire was the noiſe of rattling bows,
Of front to front oppoſed, and hand to hand;
Deep was the animated ſtrife
For love, for conqueſt, and for life;
Alternate groans re-echoed through the land:
Whilſt penſive on the diſtant ſhore,
She heard the doubtful battle roar,
Many a ſad tear the hapleſs virgin ſhed;

Fa

Far from her tender mother's arms,
She knows not yet for whom her charms
She keeps, or who ſhall ſhare her bridal bed.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

MY gueſt, in pity to the captive train,
Laments their woes, and takes his kind farewell;
Mean time, my friends, in ſecret came I here
To pour forth all my miſeries, and impart
To you my inmoſt thoughts, my laſt reſolve:
Alas! within theſe walls I have received,
Like the poor ſailor, an unhappy freight
To ſink me down, no virgin, but a wife,
The wife of my Alcides; his loved arms
Now muſt embrace us both: my faithful lord
(Faithful and good I thought him) thus rewards
My tender cares, and all the tedious toils
I ſuffered for him; but I will be calm;
For 'tis an evil I have felt before:
And yet to live with her! with her to ſhare
My huſband's bed! what woman could ſupport it!
Her youth is ſtealing onward to its prime,
Whilſt mine is withered, and the eye which longs
To pluck the opening flower, from the dry leaf
Will turn aſide; her younger charms, I fear,
Have conquered, and henceforth in name alone
Shall Deianira be Alcides' wife.
But ill do rage and violence become
The prudent matron; therefore, mark me well,

And

Aud hear what I have propoſed, to relieve
My troubled heart: within a brazen urn,
Concealed from every eye, I long have kept
That antient gift which Neſſus did bequeath me,
The hoary centaur, who was wont for hire
To bear the traveller o'er the rapid flood
Of deep Evenus, not with oars or ſail
He ſtemmed the torrent, but with nervous arm
Oppoſed, and paſt it: me, when firſt a bride
I left my father's hoſpitable roof
With my Alcides, in his arms he bore
Athwart the current; half way o'er, he dared
To offer violence, I ſhrieked aloud;
When lo! the ſon of Jove, his bow ſwift bent,
Sent forth a ſhaft, and pierced the monſter's breaſt,
Who with his dying voice did thus addreſs me;
'Daughter of Æneus, liſten to my words,
'So ſhalt thou profit by the laſt ſad journey
'Which I ſhall ever go; if in thy hand
'Thou take the drops out-flowing from the wound

This

Neſſus. This ſtory, which is the foundation of the piece before us, ſtripped of all its poetical ornaments, is as follows; Neſſus was one of that fabulous race called centaurs, half man and half horſe; his uſual employment was the carrying paſſengers over the river Evenus; Deianira entruſted herſelf to his care; the centuar fell in love with, and would have raviſhed, her; Hercules, perceiving his deſign, ſlew him with one of his arrows, poiſoned with the blood of the Lernæan hydra: Neſſus, to revenge himſelf on his rival, told Deianira in his laſt moments, that if ever her huſband proved faithleſs, ſhe might recall his love by dipping his garment in ſome of that blood which was then ſtreaming from him; Deianira believed him, and preſerved the philtre; the conſequence of this forms the ſubject of the Trachiniæ.

'This arrow made, dipped in th' envenomed blood
'Of the Lernæan hydra, with that charm
'Mayſt thou ſubdue the heart of thy Alcides,
'Nor ſhall another ever gain his love:'
Mindful of this, my friends (for from that hour
In ſecret have I kept the precious gift)
Behold a garment dipped i' th' very blood
He gave me, nor did I forget to add
What he enjoined, but have prepared it all;
I know no evil arts, nor would I learn them,
For they who practiſe ſuch, are hateful to me;
I only wiſh the charm may be of power
To win Alcides from this virgin's love,
And bring him back to Deianira's arms,
If ye ſhall deem it lawful, but if not,
I'll go no farther.

CHO. Could we be aſſured
Such is indeed th' effect, 'tis well determined.

DEI. I cannot but believe it, though, as yet,
Experience never hath confirmed it to me.

CHO. Thou ſhouldſt be certain; thou but ſeem'ſt to know,
If thou haſt never tried.

DEI. I'll try it ſoon;
For ſee, e'en now he comes out at the portal:
Let him not know our purpoſe; if the deed
Be wrong, concealment may prevent reproach:
Therefore be ſilent.

Enter LICHAS.

LIC. Speak thy laſt commands,
Daughter of Æneus, for already long
Have we delayed our journey.

DEI. Know, then, Lichas,
That whilſt thou commun'ſt with thy friends, myſelf

Have

Have hither brought a garment which I wove
For my Alcides; thou muſt bear it to him;
Tell him, no mortal muſt with touch profane
Pollute the ſacred gift, nor ſun behold it,
Nor holy temple, nor domeſtic hearth,
Ere at the altar of paternal Jove
Himſelf ſhall wear it; 'twas my ſolemn vow,
Whene'er he ſhould return, that, clothed in this,
He to the gods ſhould offer ſacrifice:
Bear too, this token, he will know it well;
Away: remember to perform thy office,
But go no farther, ſo ſhall double praiſe,
And favour from us both, reward thy duty.

LIC. If I have aught of ſkill, by Hermes right
Inſtructed in his art, I will not fail
To bear thy gift, and faithful to report
What thou haſt ſaid.

DEI. Begone; what here hath paſt
Thou know'ſt. LIC.

Nor ſun behold it, &c. Deianira probably gave this caution becauſe ſhe imagined that the virtue of her charm would be extracted by fire, and conſequently, if held near that, would have no effect when Hercules put it on.

This token. This token was a σφραγις, or ſeal-ring, which Deianira ſent with the veſt, to convince Hercules that it came from her.

By Hermes, &c. Hermes or Mercury always appears as meſſenger of the gods, and favourite errand-boy of Jupiter; he therefore naturally preſided over mortal meſſengers, and is properly mentioned by the herald as his patron and inſtructor.

To bear thy gift. Ignaroque Lichæ, quid tradat neſcia, luctus
Ipſa ſuos tradit,

ſays the elegant Ovid, who has told this ſtory in a moſt agreeable manner in the ninth book of his Metamorphoſis.

LIC. I do; and ſhall bear back the news
That all is well.

DEI. Thou art thyſelf a witneſs
How kindly I received the gueſt he ſent me.

LIC. It filled my heart with pleaſure to behold it.

DEI. What canſt thou tell him more? alas! I fear
He'll know too well the love I bear to him;
Would I could be as certain he'd return it!

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

You, who on Œta's craggy ſummit dwell,
Or from the rock, whence guſhing riv'lets flow,
Bathe in the warmer ſprings below,
You, who near the Melian bay
To golden-ſhafted Dian hymn the lay,
Now haſte to ſtring the lyre, and tune the vocal ſhell.

ANTISTROPHE I.

No mournful theme demands your penſive ſtrain,

But

You, who on Œta's, &c. This is the fourth ſong or intermede of the Chorus, who, rejoicing at the expected arrival of Hercules, invite the neighbouring youths and maidens to celebrate the feſtival, and welcome the returning conqueror.

Warmer ſprings, &c. It is reported that Vulcan firſt raiſed warm ſprings in Trachis or Sicily for the uſe of Hercules, whence warm baths were uſually called λουτρα Ηρακλεια 'Herculean Baths,'

The Melian bay, &c. The bay of Melis was not far from Trachis and adjoining to Artemiſium, celebrated by the famous ſea-fight between the Grecians and the Perſians, on the ſame day with the battle of Thermopylæ; near it was a temple ſacred to Diana.

But ſuch as, kindled by the ſacred fire,
The muſes might themſelves admire,
A loud and chearful ſong; for ſee,
The ſon of Jove returns with victory,
And richeſt ſpoils reward a life of toil and pain.

STROPHE II.

Far from his native land he took his way:
For twelve long moons, uncertain of his fate,
Did we lament his exiled ſtate,
What time his anxious wife deplored
With never-ceaſing tears her abſent lord;
But Mars at laſt hath cloſed his long, laborious day.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Let him from fair Eubœa's iſle appear;
Let winds and raging ſeas oppoſe no more,
But waft him to the wiſhed-for ſhore;
Th' anointed veſt's perſuaſive charms
Shall bring him ſoon to Deianira's arms,
Soon ſhall we ſee the great, the loved Alcides here.

ACT

Far from his native land, &c. The laſt Strophe and Antiſtrophe of this chorus are ſo drolly tranſlated by Mr. Adams, that I cannot refuſe my readers a ſight of it. It runs as follows:

STROPHE II.

'He whom, abſent from home twelve months, we waited for, 'being on the rough ſea, knowing nothing of him, but his dear 'miſerable wife, the wretched lady, with ever-ſtreaming tears, 'afflicted her ſad heart; but now raging Mars hath finiſhed the 'term of his labours.'

ANTISTROPHE II.

'Let him come, nor let his ſhip ſtand ſtill ere he arrives at this 'city, leaving this iſland habitation, where he is ſaid to ſacrifice, 'whence let him come haſtening all the day, clad with his well-'beſmeared coat of reconciliation of his love to Deianira, as the 'centaur directed her.'

ACT IV.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

ALAS! my friends, I fear I've gone too far.

CHO. Great queen, in what?

DEI. I know not what; but dread
Something to come, leſt, where I had moſt hope
Of happineſs, I meet with bittereſt woe.

CHO. Meanſt thou thy gift to Hercules?

DEI. I do;
Nor would I henceforth counſel thoſe I loved
To do a dark and deſperate deed like this,
Uncertain of th' event.

CHO. How was it? ſpeak,
If thou canſt tell us.

DEI. O! 'twas wonderful!
For you ſhall hear it; know then, the white wool
Wherein I wrapped the anointed veſt, untouched
By any hand, dropt ſelf-conſumed away,
And down the ſtone, e'en like a liquid, flowed
Diſſolving: (but 'tis fit I tell you all)
Whate'er the wounded centaur did enjoin me,
Mindful to practiſe, ſacred as the laws

On

The white wool, &c. This wool was probably made uſe of as a ſponge, with which, after dipping it in the blood, ſhe wetted the magic rope; this imbibing the fiery and poiſonous particles, on being expoſed to the air, took fire, and conſumed away, a circumſtance which could not fail to alarm the fears of Deianira, who now begins to repent of her hazardous attempt: her remorſe is naturally and pathetically deſcribed, and at the ſame time gradually prepares the audience for the cataſtrophe.

On brazen tablets graved, I have performed:
Far from the fire, and from the ſun's warm beams,
He bade me keep the charm from every eye
In ſecret hid, till time ſhould call on me
T' anoint and uſe it: this was done; and now,
The fleece in ſecret pluck'd, the charm prepared,
Long from the ſun within a cheſt concealed,
At length I brought it forth, and ſent the gift
To my Alcides; when behold a wonder,
Moſt ſtrange for tongue to tell, or heart of man
E'en to conceive! perchance the wool I caſt
Into the ſunſhine; ſoon as it grew warm
It fell to duſt, conſuming all away
In moſt ſtrange manner, then from th' earth up roſe
In frothy bubbles, e'en as from the grape
In yellow autumn flows the purple wine:
I know not what to think; but much I fear
I've done a horrid deed: for, why, my friends,
Why ſhould the dying ſavage wiſh to ſerve
His murtherer? that could never be: O? no;
He only meant by flattery to deſtroy
Me, his deſtroyer: truth is come too late,
And I alone have ſlain my dear Alcides.
I know that by his arrows Chiron fell;
I know, whate'er they touched, they ſtill were fatal;
That very poiſon mingled with the blood

Of

Chiron. Chiron was one of the centaurs, aud was wounded by Hercules with one of his arrows dipped in the blood of the Hydra; the ſtory is told at large in the fifth book of Ovid's Faſti. Deianira recollects that Hercules had ſlain Neſſus alſo with one of the ſame arrows which ſhe knew to be poiſoned; the effect was the ſame on both, and the conſéquence but too viſible with regard to Hercules himſelf.

Of dying Neſſus, will not that too kill
My Hercules? it muſt: but if he dies,
My reſolution is to periſh with him;
Thoſe, who their honour and their virtue prize,
Can never live with infamy and ſhame.

CHO. 'Tis fit we tremble at a deed of horror;
But 'tis not fitting ere we know th' event,
To give up hope, and yield us to deſpair.

DEI. There is no hope where evil counſel's ta'en.

CHO. But when we err from ignorance alone,
Small is the crime, and ſlight the puniſhment;
Such is thy fault.

DEI. The guiltleſs may talk thus,
Who know no ill; not thoſe, who are unhappy.

CHO. No more; unleſs thou mean'ſt thy ſon ſhould hear
Who now returns in ſearch of thy Alcides: [thee
Behold him here.

Enter HYLLUS.

HYL. O! would that thou wert dead!
Would I were not thy ſon! or, being ſo,
Would I could change thy wicked heart!

DEI. My ſon,
What means this paſſion?

HYL. Thou haſt ſlain thy huſband;
This very day my father haſt thou ſlain.

DEI. Alas! my child, what ſay'ſt thou?

HYL. What is paſt,
And therefore muſt be; who can e'er undo
The deed that's done?

DEI. But who could ſay I did it?

HYL. I ſaw it with theſe eyes; I heard it all
From his own lips.

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DEI. Alas! my child, what ſay'ſt thou?

HYL. What is paſt,
And therefore muſt be; who can e'er undo
The deed that's done?

DEI. But who could ſay I did it?

HYL. I ſaw it with theſe eyes; I heard it all
From his own lips.

DEI. Where didſt thou ſee him then?
Tell me, O! quickly tell me.
HYL. If I muſt,
Obſerve me well: when Hercules, returned
From conqueſt, had laid waſte the noble city
Of Eurytus, with fair triumphal ſpoils
He to Eubœa came, where, o'er the ſea,
Which beats on every ſide, Cenæum's top
Hangs dreadful; thither (to paternal Jove)
His new raiſed altars in the leafy wood,
He came to viſit; there did my glad eyes
Behold Alcides firſt: as he prepared
The frequent victim, from the palace came
Lichas thy meſſenger, and with him brought
The fatal gift: wrapt in the deadly garment
(For ſuch was thy command) twelve oxen then
Without a blemiſh, firſtlings of the ſpoil,
He ſlew; together next a hundred fell
The mingled flock: pleaſed with his gaudy veſt,
And happy in it, he awhile remained,
Offering with joy his grateful ſacrifice;
But lo! when from the holy victim roſe
The bloody flame, and from the pitchy wood
Exhaled

There did my glad eyes, &c. It is obſerved, that the diſtance from Cenæum to Trachis, is too great to admit of Hyllus's return in the ſhort time which Sophocles has allowed him: for how could Hyllus perform this journey, ſee his father, aſſiſt at the ſacrifice, be a witneſs of his agonies, and return back to Trachis, during the repreſentation of little more than one act? The unity of time is here apparently broken. The poet, as Brumoy imagines, preſumed on the diſtance of Athens, from the ſcene of action, and probably met with indulgence from his ſpectators, though it was not agreeable to his uſual accuracy in theſe particulars.

Exhaled its moiſture, ſudden a cold ſweat
Bedewed his limbs, and to his body ſtuck
As by the hand of ſome artificer
Cloſe joined to every part, the fatal veſt;
Convulſion racked his bones, and through his veins,
Like the fell ſerpent's deadly venom, raged;
Then queſtioned he the wretched, guiltleſs Lichas,
By what deteſted arts he had procured
The poiſoned garb; he, ignorant of all,
Could only ſay, it was the gift he brought
From Deianira; when Alcides heard it,
Tortured with pain, he took him by the foot,
And hurled him headlong on a pointed rock
That o'er the ocean hung; his brains daſhed forth,
With mingled blood flowed through his clotted hair
In horrid ſtreams; the multitude with ſhrieks
Lamented loudly the fury of Alcides,
And Lichas' hapleſs fate; none durſt oppoſe
His raging frenzy; proſtrate on the earth
Now would he lay and groan; and now upriſing
Would bellow forth his griefs; the mountain tops
Of Locris, and Eubœa's rocks, returned
His dreadful cries; then, on the ground out-ſtretch'd,
In bitttereſt wrath he curſed the nuptial bed
Of Æneus, and his execrations poured
On thee, his worſt of foes: at length his eyes,
Diſtorted forth from the ſurrounding ſmoke,
He caſt on me, who midſt attending crouds
Wept his ſad fate; 'approach, he cried, my ſon,
'Do not forſake thy father, rather come
'And ſhare his fate than leave me here; O! haſte,
'And take me hence, bear me where never eye
'Of mortal ſhall behold me; O! my child,

'Let me not periſh here:' thus ſpake my father;
And I obeyed: diſtracted with his pains
A veſſel brings him to this place, and ſoon
Living or dead you will behold him here.
This have thy horrid machinations done
For thy Alcides: O! may juſtice doom thee
To righteous puniſhment, if it be lawful
For me to call down vengeance on a mother,
As ſure it is, on one who hath diſclaimed
All piety like thee; the earth ſuſtains not
A better man than he whom thou haſt murthered,
Nor ſhalt thou e'er behold his like again.

[Exit Deianira.

CHO. Whence this abrupt departure? know'ſt thou not
To go in ſilence thus confirms thy guilt?

HYL. Let her be gone: and may ſome proſperous gale
Waft her far off, that theſe abhorring eyes
May never ſee her more! what boots the name
Of mother, when no longer ſhe performs
A mother's duty? let her go in peace
And, for her kindneſs to my father, ſoon
May ſhe enjoy the bleſſings ſhe beſtowed!

CHORUS.

Nor ſhalt thou, &c. 'Οποιον αλλον ουκ οψει ποτε' ſays the original. Shakeſpear makes his Hamlet ſpeak the ſame language.

Take him for all in all,
I ſhall not look upon his like again. *Hamlet.*

To go in ſilence, &c. This ſilence exactly reſembles that of Eurydice in the Antigone before taken notice of, and, as Brumoy obſerves, is infinitely preferable to Ovid's frequent repetition of

Impia quid ceſſas, Deianira, mori?

'On ne s'exhorte point (ſays the French critic) à mourir, quand 'le deſſein en eſt bien pris. Beaucoup moins le fait on avec tant 'd'art; le ſilence eſt plus eloquent, & plus vif.'

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

True was the oracle divine,
Long ſince delivered from Dodona's ſhrine,
Which ſaid, Alcides' woes ſhould laſt
Till twelve revolving years were paſt;
Then ſhould his labours end in ſweet repoſe;
Behold, my friends, 'tis come to paſs,
'Tis all fulfilled; for who, alas!
In peaceful death, or toil or ſlavery knows?

ANTISTROPHE I.

If deep within his tortured veins
The centaur's cruel poiſon reigns,
That from the hydra's baleful breath
Deſtructive flowed, replete with death,
On him another ſun ſhall never riſe;
The venom runs through every part,
And, lo! to Neſſus' direful art
Alcides falls a helpleſs ſacrifice.

STROPHE II.

Poor Deianira long deplored
Her waining charms, and ever faithleſs lord;
At length, by evil counſel ſwayed,
Her paſſions dictates ſhe obeyed,
Reſolved Alcides' doubtful truth to prove;

True was the oracle, &c. This is the fifth intermede or ſong of the chorus, and, if we divide the play into acts, muſt conclude the fourth, as it is the only part where the ſtage can be ſuppoſed vacant: it turns, we ſee, on the double ſenſe of the oracle, which was now accompliſhed in the death of Hercules. This oracle is mentioned by Deianira in the firſt ſcene of the tragedy, and by Hercules himſelf alſo in the laſt.

But now, alas! laments his fate
In ceaſeleſs woe, and finds too late
A dying huſband, and a foreign love.]

ANTISTROPHE II.

Another death muſt ſoon ſucceed,
Another victim ſoon ſhall bleed;
Fatal, Alcides, was the dart
That pierced the rival monarch's heart,
And brought Iole from her native land;
From Venus did our ſorrows flow,
The ſecret ſpring of all our woe,
For nought was done but by her dread command.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

[A noiſe within the palace.

CHORUS.

OR I'm deceived, or I did hear loud ſhrieks
Within the palace; 'twas the voice of one
In anguiſh; doubtleſs ſome calamity
Hath fallen upon us now; what can it be;
But ſee, yon matron, with contracted brow,
And unaccuſtomed ſadneſs, comes to tell
The dreadful news.

Enter NURSE.

NUR. What woes, my hapleſs daughters,
Alcides' fatal gift hath brought upon us!

CHO.

Another death, &c. The chorus fortells the death of Deianira, who had already declared, that if ſhe did not ſucceed in the attempt to regain her huſband's affection, ſhe would not long ſurvive him; this prepares the audience for the ſcene that follows.

CHO. What doſt thou tell us?
NUR. Deianira treads
The laſt ſad path of mortals.
CHO. Is ſhe gone?
NUR. 'Tis ſo indeed.
CHO. What! dead!
NUR. Again I ſay,
She is no more.
CHO. Alas! how did ſhe periſh?
NUR. Moſt fearfully: 'twas dreadful to behold.
CHO. How fell ſhe, then?
NUR. By her own hand.
CHO. But, wherefore?
What madneſs, what diſorder? what could move her
To perpetrate ſo terrible a deed?
Thus adding death to death.
NUR. The fatal ſteel
Deſtroyed her.
CHO. Didſt thou ſee it?
NUR. I was by,
Cloſe by her ſide.
CHO. How was it?
NUR. Her own arm
Struck the ſad blow.
CHO. Indeed!
NUR. Moſt veritably.
CHO. In evil hour this rival virgin came
To bring deſtruction here.
NUR. And ſo ſhe did;
Hadſt thou like me been witneſs to the deed,
Thou wouldſt much more have pitied her.
CHO. Alas!
How could a woman do it?

NUR. 'Twas moſt dreadful,
As thou ſhalt hear, for I will tell thee all:
Soon as ſhe entered at the palace gate
And ſaw her ſon prepare the funeral bed,
To th' inmoſt chamber ſilent ſhe retired
From every eye, there, at the altar's feet
Falling lamented loud her widowed ſtate;
And ever as ſhe lit on aught her hands
Had uſed in happier days, the tears would flow;
From room to room ſhe wandered, and if chance
A loved domeſtic croſſed her, ſhe would weep
And mourn her fate, for ever now deprived
Of converſe ſweet, and hymenæal joys;
Then would ſhe ſtrew her garments on the bed
Of her Alcides, (for concealed I watched
Her every motion) throw herſelf upon it,
And as the tears in a warm flood burſt forth;
'Farewell! (ſhe cried) for ever farewell now
'My nuptial couch! for never ſhalt thou more
'Receive this wretched burthen;' thus ſhe ſpake,
And with quick hand the golden button looſed,
Then caſt her robe aſide, her boſom bared,
And ſeemed prepared to ſtrike; I ran and told
The dreadful purpoſe to her ſon, too late

We

And ever as ſhe lit, &c. Such little incidents as theſe, ariſing with propriety from ſituation and circumſtance, contribute as much as any thing to point out the ſuperiority of a good writer: in Sophocles we always meet with the language of nature, and a compleat knowledge of the human heart, without any of thoſe forced conceits and refinements ſo frequent in modern writers: nothing can exceed the ſimplicity and elegance of this deſcription: Virgil felt all its merit, and has copied it cloſely. See Æn. b. 4.

We came, and ſaw her wounded to the heart;
The pious ſon beheld his bleeding mother
And wept; for well he knew, by anger fired,
And the fell centaur's cruel fraud betrayed,
Unweeting ſhe had done the dreadful deed:
Cloſe to her ſide he laid him down, and joined
His lips to hers, lamenting ſore that thus
He had accuſed her guiltleſs; then deplored
His own ſad fate, thus ſuddenly bereaved
Of both his parents: you have heard my tale.
Who to himſelf ſhall promiſe length of life?
None but the fool: for O! to-day alone
Is ours; we are not certain of to-morrow.

CHO. Which ſhall I weep? which moſt our hearts ſhould [fill
With grief, the preſent, or the future ill?
The dying, or the dead? 'tis equal woe
To feel the ſtroke, or fear th' impending blow.

STROPHE.

O! for a breeze to waft us o'er
Propitious to ſome diſtant ſhore!

To

O! for a breeze, &c. This is the ſixth and laſt intermede, or ſong of the chorus, who, alarmed at the approaching fate of Hercules, and ſhocked at the death of Deianira, lament their own diſtreſsful ſituation, as obliged to be witneſſes of ſo melancholy a ſcene: it is remarkable, that throughout this play, the choruſes are every one of them cloſely attached to the ſubject, and ariſe naturally from the various circumſtances of it.

Some diſtant ſhore. The learned reader, who conſults this paſſage in the original, will find that the ſcholiaſts have entirely miſtaken the meaning of it: and, according to cuſtom, miſled the tranſlators, one of whom renders it thus, 'Utinam aliquis aſpiret 'ſecundus noſtram ad domum ventus!' 'Would to heaven a fa-'vourable wind would blow us home!' though it is apparent that

To ſhield our ſouls from ſore affright,
And ſave us from the dreadful ſight:
That ſight the hardeſt heart would move
In his laſt pangs the ſon of Jove;
To ſee the poiſon, run through every vein,
And limbs convulſed with agonizing pain.

ANTISTROPHE.

Behold th' attendant train is nigh,
I hear the voice of miſery;
E'en as the plaintive nightingale,
That warbles ſweet her mournful tale:
Silent and ſlow they lead him on;
Hark! I hear Alcides groan!
Again 'tis ſilence all! this way they tread;
Or ſleeps he now, or reſts he with the dead?

Enter HERCULES, HYLLUS, ATTENDANTS.

HYL. Alas! my father; whither ſhall I go,
Wretch that I am! O! where ſhall I betake me?
What will become of thy afflicted ſon?

ATT. Speak ſoftly, youth, do not awake his pains;
Refrain thy grief, for yet Alcides lives,
Though verging to the tomb; be calm.

HYL. What ſay'ſt thou?
Doth he yet live?

ATT. He doth; diſturb not thus
His ſlumbers, nor provoke the dire diſeaſe.

HYL. Alas! I cannot bear to ſee him thus.

[Hercules awakes.

HER.

as the chorus conſiſts of virgins of Trachis, they were at home already, and only wiſhed to be removed for a time, to avoid a ſight ſo diſagreeable as the death of Hercules. Ratallerus, who, as I obſerved, is the only tranſlator that ſeems to have underſtood Sophocles, perceived this abſurdity, and has given us the true ſenſe.

HER. O! Jove! where am I, and with whom? what land
Contains the wretched Hercules, oppreſſed
With never-ending woes? ah, me! again
The deadly poiſon racks me.

ATT. [To Hyllus.] Seeſt thou not
'Twere better far to have remained in ſilence,
And not awaked him.

HYL. 'Twas impoſſible
Unmoved to look on ſuch calamity;
I could not do it.

HER. O! Cenæan rocks,
Where ſmoke the ſacred altars! is it thus,
O! Jove, thou doſt reward my piety!
What dreadful puniſhment is this thy hand
Hath laid on me, who never could deſerve
Such bitter wrath? what incantations now,
What power of medicine, can aſſuage my pain,
Unleſs great Jove aſſiſted? health to me
Without him, were a miracle indeed.
Let me, O! let me reſt, refuſe me not
A little ſlumber; why will ye torment me?
Why bend me forward? O! 'tis worſe than death;
Had you not waked me, I had been at peace:
Again it rages with redoubled force,
Where are you now, ye thankleſs Græcians, where,
Whom I have toiled to ſerve on the rough main,
And

O! Jove, where am I. Hercules, we muſt ſuppoſe, is here brought on the ſtage on a couch or litter, 'affertur (ſays Came-'rarius) inter cruciatus ſopitus in lectulo; his pains intermitting for a ſhort time, he is dropped into a ſlumber; in this condition he is met by Hyllus, who imagines him to be dead; the chorus perceive he is only aſleep; he awakes in agony; the ſcene ſtrongly reſembles one in the Hyppolytus of Euripides.

And through the pathleſs wood; where are ye now
To help a dying wretch? will no kind hand
Stretch forth the friendly ſword, or in the flame
Conſume me? none, alas! will cut me off
From hated life.

ATT. O! youth! aſſiſt thy father;
It is beyond my ſtrength; thy quicker ſight
May be more uſeful.

HYL. My poor aid is ready;
But whereſoe'er I am, 'tis not in me
T' expel the ſubtle poiſon that deſtroys him;
Such is the will of Jove.

HER. My ſon, my ſon,
Where art thou? bear me up, aſſiſt me; O!
Again it comes, th' unconquerable ill,
The dire diſeaſe; O! Pallas, aid me now,
Draw forth thy ſword, my ſon; ſtrike, ſtrike thy father,
And heal the wound thy impious mother made;
O! could I ſee her like myſelf deſtroyed,
I ſhould be happy! brother of great Jove,
Sweet Pluto, hear me! O! with ſpeedy death
Lay me to reſt, and bury all my woes.

CHO. The anguiſh of th' unhappy man, my friends,
Is terrible; I tremble but to hear him.

HER. What hath this body ſuffered! O! the toils,
The labours I endured, the pangs I felt,
Unutterable woes! but never aught
So dreadful as this ſore calamity

Oppreſſed

O! the toils, &c. This pathetic lamentation of Hercules hath met with univerſal applauſe from the admirers and critics of antiquity. The great Roman orator has left us a tranſlation of it, which remains almoſt the only ſpecimen of his poetical abilities. See Tully's Tuſculan queſtions, b. 2.

Oppreſſed Alcides; not the wife of Jove,
Nor vile Euryſtheus could torment me thus,
As, Æneus, thy deceitful daughter hath;
Oh! I am tangled in a cruel net,
Woven by the furies; it devours my fleſh,
Dries up my veins, and drinks the vital blood;
My body's withered, and I cannot break
Th' indiſſoluble chain: nor hoſtile ſpear,
Nor earth-born giants, nor the ſavage herd,
The wild Barbarian, or the Græcian hoſt,
Not all the nations I have journeyed o'er,
Could do a deed like this: at laſt I fall
Like a poor coward, by a woman's hand,
Unarmed, and unaſſiſted; O! my ſon,
Now prove thyſelf the offspring of Alcides;
Nor let thy reverence of a mother's name
Surpaſs thy duty to an injured father;
Go, bring her hither, give her to my wrath,
That I may ſee whom thou wilt moſt lament,
When thou behold'ſt my vengeance fall on her;
Fear not, my ſon, but go; have pity on me,
Pity thy father; all muſt pity me,
Whilſt they behold, e'en as the tender maid,
Alcides weep, who never wept before.
I bore my ſorrows all without a groan,
But now thou ſeeſt I am a very woman,
Come near, my child; O! think what I endure,
For I will ſhew thee; look on this poor body,
Let all behold it: what a ſight is here!
Oh! me! again the cruel poiſon tears
My entrails, nor affords a moment's eaſe.
O! take me, Pluto, to thy gloomy reign;
Father of lightning, mighty Jove, ſent down

Thy

Thy bolt, and ſtrike me now! again it racks,
It tortures me? O! hands, that once had ſtrength,
And you, my ſinewy arms, was it by you
The terrible Nemæan lion fell,
The dreadful hydra, and the lawleſs race
Of centaurs? did this withered hand ſubdue
The Erymanthian boar, wide-waſting plague!
And from the ſhades of Orcus drag to light
The tripple-headed monſter? by this arm
Did the fierce guardian of the golden fruit
In Libya's deſarts fall? unnumbered toils
Have I endured of old, and never yet
Did mortal bear a trophy from Alcides:
But nerveleſs now this arm; ſee, from the bone
Darts the looſe fleſh; I waſte beneath the power
Of this dark peſtilence: O! Hercules,
Why boaſt thy mother ſprung of nobleſt race,
And vainly call thyſelf the ſon of Jove?
But mark me well; this creeping ſhadow ſtill,
Poor as it is, ſhall yet revenge itſelf
On her who did the execrable deed;
Would ſhe were here to feel my wrath, to know
And teach mankind, that Hercules, though dead,
As whilſt he lived, can ſcourge the guilty ſtill!

CHO. Unhappy Greece! how wilt thou mourn the loſs
Of ſuch a man!

HYL. Permit me but to ſpeak,
Diſtempered as thou art, my father, hear me;
Nought ſhall I aſk unfit for thee to grant;

Be

Nemæan lion. Nemæa was a wood near Argia in Pelopponeſus, where Hercules ſlew a lion of prodigious ſize and fierceneſs.

The Erymanthian boar. Erymanthus was a mountain of Arcadia, where Hercules ſlew a wild boar that infeſted the country.

Be calm and liſten to me; yet thou know'ſt not
How groundleſs thy complaints, and what new joy
Awaits thee ſtill.

HER. Be brief then, and inform me;
My pains afflict me ſo I cannot gueſs
Thy ſubtle purpoſe.

HYL. 'Twas to ſpeak of her,
My mother; 'twas to tell thee of her ſtate,
And how unweeting ſhe offended thee.

HER. Thou worſt of children! wouldſt thou then defend
The murther of thy father? dar'ſt thou thus
Recall the ſad remembrance of her crime?

HYL. It muſt not be concealed; I know too well
I can no longer hide it.

HER. What? her guilt?
'Tis known already.

HYL. Thou'lt not always think ſo.

HER. Speak then, but take good heed thou ſhew thyſelf
Worthy thy father.

HYL. Know then,——ſhe is dead.

HER. O! dreadful! murthered? by what hand?

HYL. Her own.

HER. Would ſhe had fallen by mine!

HYL. Alas! my father,
Didſt thou know all, thy anger would be changed
To pity for her.

HER. That were ſtrange indeed;
Why doſt thou think ſo?

HYL. She did mean thee well,
But erred unknowing.

HER. Meant ſhe well to ſlay
Thy father?

HYL. Thy new marriage was the cauſe:

She had prepared a philtre for thy love,
And knew not 'twas a poiſon.

HER. But ſay, who
So ſkilled in magic arts at Trachis here
Could give her this?

HYL. The ſavage Centaur Neſſus,
Who did perſuade her 'twould reſtore thy love
Given to another wife.

HER. Undone Alcides!
I die, my child; there is no life for me;
Alas! I ſee it now; I ſee my woes;
Hyllus, away, thy father is no more;
Begone, and call thy brothers, call Alcmena,
The wife, alas! in vain, the wife of Jove;
Go, bring them here, that with my lateſt breath
I may declare my fate, long ſince foretold
By oracles divine.

HYL. Alcmena's gone
To Tyrinth; with her many of thy ſons
Remain; ſome dwell at Thebes, the reſt are here,
And wait with me to hear, and to obey, thee.

HER. Then liſten to me, for the time is come
When thou muſt prove thyſelf indeed my ſon;
Know, Jove, my heavenly ſire, long ſince foretold
I was not born to periſh by the hand
Of living man, but from ſome habitant

Of

To Tyrinth. Tyrinth or Tyrinthia was a city in the neighbourhood of Argos.

Of living man. The original is πνεοντος μηδενος, which, literally tranſlated, anſwers exactly to our common expreſſion, 'no 'man breathing;' but this is too low and familiar for tragedy: it is obſervable, that there is a ſtrong reſemblance between the oracles of antiquity, and the witches of modern times: we cannot read

Of Pluto's dark abode ſhould meet my fate;
The centaur Neſſus (ſo was it fulfilled)
Though dead deſtroyed me: but I'll tell thee more,
New oracles confirmed the old, for know,
When to the Selli's ſacred grove I came,
(The wandering prieſts who o'er the mountains roam,
And reſt their wearied limbs on the cold ground)
An antient oak prophetic did declare,
That if I lived to this deciſive hour,
Here all my labours, all my toils ſhould end;
I thought it told me I ſhould live in peace;
Alas! it only meant that I muſt die,
For death will put an end to every care.
Since thus it is, my ſon, thou too muſt join
To eaſe Alcides; let me not reproach thee,
But yield thy willing aid, nor e'er forget
The beſt of laws, obedience to a father.

HYL. Thy words afright me; but declare thy purpoſe;
Behold me ready to perform thy orders,
Whate'er they be.

HER. Firſt give me then thy hand.

HYL. But why this pledge, and wherefore anxious thus
Doſt thou require it?

HER. Wilt thou give it me,
Or doſt refuſe?

the paſſage before us, without recollecting a parallel one in Shakeſpear, where he makes his witches foretel,

'That none of woman born ſhould ſlay Macbeth;'

which is accompliſhed by its proving afterwards that Duncan

'Was from his mother's womb untimely ripped,'

in the ſame manner as Hercules fell by the artifice of Neſſus, long after his death.

HYL. There, take it; I obey.
HER. First ſwear then by the head of Jove my ſire.
HYL. I will; but what?
HER. Swear that thou wilt perform
All I enjoin thee.
HYL. Bear me witneſs, Jove!
I ſwear.
HER. And imprecate the wrath divine
If thou perform'ſt it not.
HYL. I ſhall not fail;
But, if I do, may vengeance ſwift o'ertake me!
HER. Thou know'ſt the top of Œta's ſacred hill.
HYL. I know it well, and many a ſacrifice
Have offered there.
HER. That is the deſtined place,
Where thou aſſiſted by thy choſen friends,
My ſon, muſt bear the body of Alcides;
There ſhalt thou cut thee many a leafy branch
From the wild olive and deep-rooted oak,
Then caſt me on it, take thy torch, and light
My funeral pile; without one tear or groan
Unmanly do it, if thou art my ſon;
For if thou fail'ſt, remember, after death,
A father's curſes will ſit heavy on thee.
HYL. Alas! my father, what haſt thou commanded?
What haſt thou bade me do?
HER. What muſt be done,
Or thou art not the ſon of Hercules.
HYL. A dreadful deed! and muſt I then become
A parricide, and murther thee?
HER. Oh! no!
My kind phyſician, balm of all my woes.

HYL.

HYL. Myſelf to caſt thee in the flames! is that
An office fit for me?
HER. If that alone
Seem dreadful to thee, yet perform the reſt.
HYL. I'll bear thee thither.
HER. Wilt thou raiſe the pile?
HYL. I will do any thing, but be myſelf
The executioner.
HER. 'Tis well, my ſon:
But one thing more, and I am ſatisfied;
Tis but a little.
HYL. Be it e'er ſo great,
I ſhall obey.
HER. Thou know'ſt the virgin daughter
Of Eurytus.
HYL. Iole?
HER. Her, my ſon;
Remember, 'tis a father's laſt command,
And thou haſt ſworn obedience; that Iole
I do bequeath thee; take her to thy arms
When I am dead, and let her be thy wife:

Take her to thy arms. It muſt be acknowledged, that the requeſt of Hercules is of a very extraordinary nature: the ſon is deſired, or rather commanded, to marry his father's miſtreſs, and this, not to ſhield her from the reſentment of the injured mother, now dead, but only, as it ſhould ſeem, that ſo valuable a treaſure ſhould not go out of the family. Hyllus remonſtrates againſt it, but in vain, and at laſt gives his father a promiſe of conſent, which we do not, however, remember to have read that he ever performed. Racine is ſuppoſed by Brumoy to have copied this incident in his Mithridate, though with ſome difference in the circumſtance, his ſon being repreſented as an admirer of his father's miſtreſs, and, therefore, well prepared to receive the legacy.

It is not fitting ſhe, who lay by th' ſide
Of Hercules, to any but the ſon
Of Hercules ſhoulde e'r deſcend; to thee
Alone I yield her: ſpeak not, but obey me:
After thy kind compliance to refuſe
So ſlight a favour were to cancel all. [aſide.]

HYL. Alas! diſtempered as he is, to chide him
Were moſt unkind; and yet, what madneſs this!

HER. Thou wilt not do it then;

HYL. What! marry her,
Who ſlew my mother! her, who hath brought thee
To this ſad ſtate! it were an act of phrenzy:
Death be my portion rather than to live
With thoſe I hate.

HER. [Turning to the chorus.] He will not pay me
The duty which he owes a dying father: [then
But if thou doſt not, curſes from the gods
Await thee.

HYL. O! thou rav'ſt; it is the rage
Of thy diſtemper makes thee talk ſo wildly.

HER. Thou haſt awakened all my woes; again
They torture now.

HYL. Alas! what doubts ariſe,
What fears perplex me!

HER. Mean'ſt thou to diſpute
A father's will?

HYL.

Who lay by th' ſide of Hercules. This is a literal tranſlation of the original 'εμοις πλευροις κλιθεισαν,' and anſwers exactly to our own idiom,

"She might lay by the ſide of an emperor, and command
"him taſks." Shakeſpear's Othello.

HYL. Muſt I then learn of thee
To do a wicked deed?
HER. It is not wicked,
If I requeſt it of thee.
HYL. Is it juſt?
HER. It is; the gods are witneſſes 'tis juſt.
HYL. Then by thoſe gods I ſwear, I will perform
What thou command'ſt: I never can be deemed
Or baſe, or impious, for obeying thee.
HER. 'Tis well, my ſon; one added kindneſs more,
And I am ſatisfied: before the racks
Of dire convulſion, and the pangs of madneſs
Again attack me, throw me on the pile.
Haſte then, and bear me to it, there at laſt
I ſhall have peace, and reſt from all my ſorrows.
HYL. Since 'tis thy will, my father, we ſubmit.
HER. Now, ere the dreadful malady return,
Be firm, my ſoul, e'en as the hardened ſteel;
Suſpend thy cries, and meet the fatal blow
With joy and pleaſure; bear me hence, my friends,
For you have ſhewn yourſelves my friends indeed,
And proved the baſe ingratitude of thoſe
From whom I ſprang, the cruel gods, who ſaw
Unmoved the woes of their unhappy ſon.
'Tis not in mortal to foreſee his fate;
Mine is to them diſgraceful, and to me
Moſt terrible, to me of all mankind
The moſt diſtreſſed, the poor, the loſt Alcides.
CHO. Iole, come not forth, unhappy virgin,

Iole, &c. Iole, we may ſuppoſe, is coming on the ſtage, anxious to know the fate of Hercules, but is ſtopped by the chorus, and prevented from being a witneſs of the melancholy ſcene.—

Already haſt thou ſeen enough of woe,
And yet freſh ſorrows wait thee; but remember,
All is decreed, and all the work of Jove.

Hercules is led out by Hyllus, who had promiſed to accompany him to mount Œta, where he expired.

*** This tragedy gave riſe to the Hercules Furens of Seneca, and the Hercule Mourant of Rotrou: they who will take the trouble to peruſe theſe imperfect copies of Sophocles, will eaſily perceive how much the Latin and French poets have deviated from the ſimplicity and beauty of the original.

FINIS.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS, king of THEBES.

JOCASTA, wife of ŒDIPUS.

CREON, brother to JOCASTA.

TIRESIAS, a blind prophet of THEBES.

A SHEPHERD from CORINTH.

A MESSENGER.

An OLD SHEPHERD, formerly belonging to LAIUS.

HIGH PRIEST of JUPITER.

CHORUS,

Compoſed of the PRIESTS and ANTIENT MEN of THEBES, THEBAN YOUTHS, CHILDREN of ŒDIPUS, ATTENDANTS, *&c.*

SCENE, THEBES, before the palace of ŒDIPUS.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS.

ACT I.

ŒDIPUS, HIGH PRIEST of Jupiter.

ŒDIPUS.

OH! my loved ſons, the youthful progeny
Of antient Cadmus, wherefore ſit you here
And ſuppliant thus, with ſacred boughs adorned,
Crowd

It is ſcarce poſſible to conceive any thing more ſolemn and magnificent than the opening of this tragedy; in the front of the ſcene in the palace of Œdipus; before it, an altar erected to him; at the foot of which, we ſee a number of young men of the firſt quality in Thebes, with boughs of ſupplication in their hands, and proſtrate on the earth; with them the high prieſt of Jupiter, and a little behind, ſeveral other prieſts and old men, as preparing for a ſacrifice; beyond them we have a diſtant view of the two temples of Minerva, with their altars, and a large concourſe of people ſtanding round them, ſeeming, by various acts of worſhip, to deprecate the general calamity: the ſcenery and decorations, neceſſary on this occaſion, account, in ſome meaſure, for the otherwiſe incredible expence which the Athenians are ſaid to have been at, in the repreſentation of this piece.

Oh! my loved ſons, &c. Œdipus, alarmed at the groans and lamentations of his people thronging to the altar, comes out of his palace to enquire into the cauſe of their diſtreſs; this humanity and tenderneſs recommend his character to the audience, and naturally excite that pity and compaſſion which the poet intends to raiſe for his ſucceeding misfortunes; he calls his ſubjects the progeny of Cadmus, who was the founder of Thebes, about two hundred years before his time.

With ſacred boughs adorned. When prayers and ſupplications were to be made, either in the temples or other places, the peti-

Crowd to our altars? frequent ſacrifice,
And prayers, and ſighs, and ſorrows, fill the land.
I could have ſent to learn the fatal cauſe;
But ſee, your anxious ſovereign comes himſelf
To know it all from you; behold your king,
Renowned Œdipus; do thou, old man,
For beſt that office ſuits thy years, inform me,
Why you are come? is it the preſent ill
That calls you here, or dread of future woe?
Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel
For grief like yours, and pity ſuch diſtreſs:
If there be aught that Œdipus can do
To ſerve his people, know me for your friend.

PRI. O! king, thou ſeeſt what numbers throng thy al-
Here, bending ſad beneath the weight of years, tars;
The hoary prieſts, here crowd the choſen youth
Of

tioners carried boughs in their hands, bound round with fillets of white wool: this was always looked on as a mark of diſtreſs, which entitled them to a peculiar regard, rendered their perſons ſacred, and protected them from all violence; it is not improbable, but that this cuſtom among the Greeks was borrowed from the Jews, whom we find carrying boughs on ſolemn feſtivals. See Macchab. chap. xiii.

Renowned Œdipus. Dacier obſerves in this place, that Œdipus's mention of himſelf anſwers the double purpoſe, of making his perſon known to the ſpectators on his firſt entrance, and at the ſame time conveying to them an idea of his character a proud and ſelf-ſufficient the latter of theſe reaſons, aſcribed by Dacier, may perhaps appear unneceſſary to thoſe who are acquainted with the manners and genius of antiquity; the heroes of Homer and Virgil, we may remember, make no ſcruple of boaſting their own abilities and perfections; Sophocles, therefore, wants no excuſe for talking the ſame language.

Of Thebes, with theſe a weak and ſuppliant train
Of helpleſs infants, laſt in me behold
The miniſter of Jove: far off thou ſeeſt
Aſſembled multitudes, with laurel crowned,
To where Minerva's hallowed temples riſe
Frequent repair, or where Iſmenus laves
Apollo's ſacred ſhrine: too well thou know'ſt,
Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful ſtorms oppreſt,
Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood;
The teeming earth her blaſted harveſt mourns,
And on the barren plain the flocks and herds
Unnumbered periſh; dire abortion thwarts
The mother's hopes, and painful ſhe brings forth
The half-formed infant; baleful peſtilence
Hath laid our city waſte, the fiery god
Stalks o'er deſerted Thebes; whilſt, with our groans
Enriched, the gloomy god of Erebus
Triumphant ſmiles: O! Œdipus, to thee
We bend; behold theſe youths, with me they kneel,
And ſuppliant at thy altars ſue for aid,
To thee thee firſt of men, and only leſs
Than they whoſe favour thou alone canſt gain,
The gods above; thy wiſdom yet may heal
The deep-felt wounds, and make the powers divine
Propitious to us: Thebes long ſince to thee

Her

Thy wretched Thebes, &c. This ſhort but pathetic deſcription the plague at Thebes cannot be ſufficiently admired; the poetical image of the fiery god ſtalking over the city, and Pluto's growing rich with the groans of the dying men, muſt ſtrike every feeling heart; perhaps the beauty and ſimplicity of this paſſage will beſt appear by comparing it with the tinſel refinements of Seneca, and the wild rants of our own madman Lee, on the ſame ſubject.

Her ſafety owed, when from the Sphynx delivered
Thy grateful people ſaw thee, not by man
But by the gods inſtructed, ſave the land;
Now then, thou beſt of kings, aſſiſt us now,
O! by ſome mortal or immortal aid
Now ſuccour the diſtreſſed! on wiſdom oft
And prudent counſels, in the hour of ill,
Succeſs awaits; O! deareſt prince, ſupport,
Relieve thy Thebes, on thee, its ſaviour once,
Again it calls; now, if thou wouldſt not ſee
The memory periſh of thy former deeds,
Let it not call in vain, but riſe, and ſave!
With happieſt omens once and fair ſucceſs

We

From the Sphynx delivered. The ſtory of the Sphynx, from the variety of accounts handed down to us concerning it, is almoſt as much a riddle to us as it was to Œdipus: the Sphynx, according to poetical hiſtory, was a monſter with the face of a woman, wings of a bird, body of a dog, and claws like a lion; ſhe dwelt near Thebes, and every day deſtroyed many people; the oracle declared that ſhe could never be conquered, till ſome one was found that could expound a certain riddle, or ænigma, which ſhe propoſed. After many unſucceſsful attempts, Œdipus came and explained it; the Sphynx was deſtroyed, the nation delivered, and Œdipus rewarded for it with the kingdom of Thebes. Some authors interpret the Sphynx into a maritime force, invading Bœotia under the command of a woman, whom Œdipus ſlew; others pretend that the Sphynx was a natural daughter of Laius, who ſlew all thoſe Thebans, who dared to mention an oracle of Apollo, ſaid to have been given to Cadmus, concerning the ſucceſſion to the throne, and declaring baſtards incapable of inheriting it; the fable ſays, that ſhe defied them to produce this oracle; but that it was revealed to Œdipus in a dream, who repeated it publicly, and deſtroyed his ſiſter.

We ſaw thee crowned; O! be thyſelf again,
And may thy will and fortune be the ſame!
If thou art yet to reign, O! king remember
A ſovereign's riches is a peopled realm;
For what will ſhips or lofty towers avail
Unarmed with men to guard and to defend them?

ŒDI. O! my unhappy ſons, too well I know
Your ſad eſtate; I know the woes of Thebes;
And yet amongſt you lives not ſuch a wretch
As Œdipus; for O! on me, my children,
Your ſorrows preſs; alas! I feel for you
My people, for myſelf, for Thebes, for all;
Think not, I ſlept regardleſs of your ills;
O! no, with many a tear I wept your fate,
And oft in meditation deep revolved
How beſt your peace and ſafety to reſtore:
The only medicine that my thoughts could find
I have adminiſtered, Menœceus' ſon,
The noble Creon, went by my command
To Delpho's, from Apollo's ſhrine to know
What muſt be done to ſave this wretched land;
'Tis time he were returned; I wonder much
At his delay; if, when he comes, your king
Perform not all the god enjoins, then ſay
He is the worſt of men.

PRI. O! king, thy words
Are gracious, and, if right theſe youths inform me,
Creon is here.

ŒDI. O! Phœbus, grant he come
With tidings chearful as the ſmile he wears!

PRI. He is the meſſenger of good; for ſee,
His brows are crowned with laurel.

ŒDI.

His brows are crowned with laurel. It was uſual for thoſe

ŒDI. We ſhall ſoon
Be ſatisfied: he comes.

Enter CREON, CHORUS.

ŒDI. My deareſt Creon,
O! ſay, what anſwer bear'ſt thou from the god,
Or good, or ill?

CRE. Good, very good; for know,
The worſt of ills, if rightly uſed, may prove
The means of happineſs.

ŒDI. What ſays my friend?
This anſwer gives me nought to hope or fear.

CRE. Shall we retire, or would you that I ſpeak
In public here?

ŒDI. Before them all declare it;
Their woes ſit heavier on me than my own.

CRE. Then mark what I have heard: the god com-
That inſtant we drive forth the fatal cauſe [mands
Of this dire peſtilence, nor nouriſh here
Th' accurſed monſter.

ŒDI. Who? what monſter? how
Remove it?

CRE. Or by baniſhment, or death;
Life muſt be given for life; for yet his blood
Reſts on the city.

ŒDI.

who, on conſulting the oracle of Delphos, had received a favourable anſwer, to put on a crown of laurel at their return, in token of their ſucceſs: Creon had reaſon to look upon his in that light, as it pointed out an immediate remedy for the evil: the ſight of the laurel, therefore, raiſes the hopes of Œdipus, and conſequently heightens his diſappointment afterwards. Sophocles, throughout this excellent piece, appears like a fine painter, whoſe judicious mixture and diſpoſition of light and ſhade animates and enlivens the picture.

ŒDI. Whoſe? what means the god?

CRE. O! king, before thee Laius ruled o'er Thebes.

ŒDI. I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.

CRE. Laius was ſlain, and on his murtherers,
So Phœbus ſays, we muſt have vengeance.

ŒDI. Where,
Where are the murtherers? who ſhall trace the guilt
Buried ſo long in ſilence?

CRE. Here, he ſaid,
E'en in this land: what's ſought for may be found,
But truth, unſearched for, ſeldom comes to light.

ŒDI. How did he fall, and where? at home, abroad,
Died he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?

CRE.

How did he fall? This, Dacier thinks, is the only objection that can be made to the fable of Œdipus, and which is, in his opinion, inſuperable: Ariſtotle had previouſly affirmed it to be abſolutely neceſſary, that among all the incidents which compoſe the fable, no one ſhould be without reaſon; or, if that be impoſſible, it ought to be ſo managed, that what is without reaſon ſhould be always out of the tragedy; as Sophocles has prudently obſerved in his Œdipus. It was without reaſon (ſays Dacier in his comment on this paſſage of Ariſtotle) that Œdipus ſhould be ſo long married to Jocaſta, and not know in what manner Laius was killed, or make inquiry after the murtherers; but as the ſubject could not ſubſiſt without this circumſtance, Sophocles has judiciouſly placed it out of the action: the poet is anſwerable only for thoſe incidents which make a part in his ſubject, and not for thoſe which precede or follow it. Brumoy is of the ſame opinion with Dacier, and ſays it is 'un defaut viſible, quoique neceſſaire,' 'a 'viſible though a neceſſary fault, that Ariſtotle therefore has endeavoured to excuſe Sophocles as well as he could.

If I had leiſure and inclination to turn commentator on this paſſage before us, I cannot but think it were an eaſy taſk, in op-

CRE. He left his palace, fame reports, to ſeek
Some oracle; ſince that, we ne'er beheld him.
ŒDI. But did no meſſenger return? not one
Of all his train, of whom we might enquire,
Touching this murther?
CRE. One, and one alone,
Came back, who, flying, 'ſcaped the general ſlaughter;
But nothing, ſave one little circumſtance,
Or knew, or e'er related.
ŒDI. What was that?

Much

poſition to the arbitrary deciſion both of Greek and French critics, to defend Sophocles, and to prove that there is no ſuch glaring abſurdity in the ſuppoſition of Œdipus's real or pretended ignorance on this occaſion: was it the buſineſs of Œdipus, of a ſtranger, who, by a lucky concurrence of circumſtances, was juſt raiſed to a throne which he had no right to, to inſpect too narrowly into the murther of his predeceſſor, whom he thought no ways related to him? To make public inquiry might only have raiſed public commotions; and as to private intelligence, which he might have had from Jocaſta, it was certainly a ſubject too delicate to be touched on when they firſt came together, and of very little conſequence afterwards: it might indeed be the buſineſs of the people, and doubtleſs would have been, but for a circumſtance which ſeems to have eſcaped Ariſtotle and his followers, and is notwithſtanding an obvious reaſon for their ſilence in this particular: we are told, a few lines below, that the Thebans made no inquiry into the murther of Laius, becauſe their attention was otherwiſe employed.

The Sphynx,
Her dire ænigma kept our thoughts intent
On preſent ills, nor gave us time to ſearch
The paſt myſterious deed.

This kept every thing quiet for a time, till the affair by degrees naturally ſunk into oblivion,

Much may be learned from that: a little dawn
Of light appearing, may diſcover all.

CRE. Laius, attacked by robbers, and oppreſſed
By number, fell; ſuch is his tale.

ŒDI. Would they,
Would robbers do ſo deſperate a deed,
Unbribed and unaſſiſted?

CRE. So indeed
Suſpicion whiſpered then; but, Laius dead,
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.

ŒDI. But what ſtrange cauſe could ſtop enquiry thus
Into the murther of a king?

CRE. The Sphynx;
Her dire ænigma kept our thought intent
On preſent ills, nor gave us time to ſearch
The paſt myſterious deed.

ŒDI. Myſelf will try
Soon to unveil it; thou, Apollo, well,
And well haſt thou, my Creon, lent thy aid;
Your Œdipus ſhall now perform his part;

Y Yes,

Oppreſſed by numbers. This proves afterwards not to be true; for Œdipus was alone when he killed Laius; the ſervant notwithſtanding might be ſuppoſed to have related the ſtory in this manner, to excuſe his own cowardice, and ſave the honour of his maſter.—This falſhood was neceſſary to the carrying on of the plot, which would otherwiſe have been too ſoon unravalled.

Myſelf will try, &c. Nothing could be better deſigned than thus making Œdipus a principal agent in the diſcovery of his own guilt; every method which he makes uſe of to promote his eaſe and ſafety, tends to his miſery and deſtruction; he endeavours only to find out the murtherer of his wife's firſt huſband; that huſband proves to be his own father, and himſelf the murtherer of that father; the whole is truly tragical.

Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country,
And ſo I ought; for not to friends alone
Or kindred owe I this, but to myſelf;
Who murthered him perchance would murther me:
His cauſe is mine: wherefore, my children, riſe,
Take hence your ſuppliant boughs, and ſummon here
The race of Cadmus, my aſſembled people;
Nought ſhall be left untried: Apollo leads,
And we will riſe to joy or ſink for ever.

PRI. Haſte then, my ſons; for this we hither came;
About it quick, and may the god, who ſent
This oracle, protect, defend, and ſave us!

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O! thou, great oracle divine,
Who didſt to happy Thebes remove,
From Delphi's golden ſhrine,
And in ſweet ſounds declare the will of Jove;

Daughter

Chorus. The critics are much divided in opinion concerning the perſons who compoſe the chorus of this tragedy. The antient Greek ſcholiaſt aſſures us, that the moment the high-prieſt of Jupiter, with his attendant train of young men, leave the ſtage at the end of the laſt ſcene, a certain number of the inhabitants of Thebes enter and form the chorus; with this opinion of the ſcholiaſt, Mr. Boivin partly agrees; and only adds, that the chorus conſiſted of the whole body of the people, who, impatient to hear the anſwer of the oracle, had aſſembled together, and crowded towards the palace; that the principal citizens take their places on the ſtage, and ſpeak by their choragus or chief, the reſt ſtanding at ſome diſtance: in ſupport of this aſſertion, Mr. Boivin produces ſeveral arguments; the moſt forcible of which is, that Œdipus, in his addreſs to the chorus, calls them the citizens of Thebes and deſcendants of Cadmus: Mr. Dacier,

Daughter of hope, O! ſooth my ſoul to reſt,
And calm the riſing tumult in my breaſt;

on the other hand, affirms, that on the departure of the high-prieſt, the other prieſts and ſacrificers, who remain on the ſtage, compoſe the chorus, which is afterwards joined by the people, whom Œdipus had commanded to aſſemble, and who could not poſſibly have been got together ſo quickly as to enter and make a chorus immediately, according to Boivin: it is much more natural, he ſays, to ſuppoſe that the prieſts belonging to the ſeveral temples, the 'οι συν γηρᾳ βαρεις,' who had heard the converſation between Œdipus and Creon, ſhould join in their invocation to Apollo, requeſting him to explain the oracle, and deliver their country. Thoſe who are deſirous of entering more minutely into the arguments brought by theſe gentlemen on both ſides of the queſtion, will meet with a ſummary account of it in the Hiſtorie de l'Academie des inſcriptiones & Belles Lettres, Tom. 3, p. 108. Brumoy ſides with the ſcholiaſt and Boivin, and gives the chorus the title of antient Thebans; alledging only as his reaſon, that Jocaſta calls them χωρας ανακτες 'Princes, or men of the firſt rank, in Thebes,' which, perhaps, might be applied with equal propriety to the prieſts.

The learned Dr. Burton, whoſe Πενταλογια is juſt come to my hands, has given us, in his excellent and uſeful notes on the Œdipus Tyrannus, an opinion in ſome meaſure differing from, and perhaps preferable to, all the reſt: he imagines that Œdipus, the high-prieſt, &c. retiring, the ſtage is left in poſſeſſion of the prieſts, who form the chorus and ſing the firſt ſong or intermede during the abſence of the king, who returns ſoon after together with the aſſembled people; that then the prieſts go out and give place to a new chorus, compoſed of the principal citizens of Thebes, who continue on the ſtage to the end of the drama. This ſolution of the difficulty is ingenious, but ſeems to want that kind of confirmation which ariſes from ſimilitude of practice in the ſame author: we do not remember any inſtance in Sophocles of the like conduct with regard to his chorus.

Look down, O! Phœbus, on thy loved abode;
Speak, for thou know'ſt the dark decrees of fate,
Our preſent and our future ſtate,
O! Delian, be thou ſtill our healing god!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Minerva, firſt on thee I call,
Daughter of Jove, immortal maid,
Low beneath thy feet we fall,
O! bring thy ſiſter Dian to our aid;
Goddeſs

The Dr. indeed ſays, examples are not wanting, and mentions the hymn to Apollo in the Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides, as a ſimilar circumſtance; but, beſides that the caſes are not exactly parallel, it may be ſufficient to obſerve that the conduct of Euripides ſhould by no means determine that of Sophocles, who is infinitely more correct and regular in the plan and diſpoſition of every part of his tragedies, than his illuſtrious rival. If, after the ingenious conjectures of theſe gentlemen, I were to propoſe my own on this point, it would be, that the ſame chorus continues from the begining to the end, and that it conſiſted of the prieſts and ſacrificers, intermingled with the principal and moſt antient inhabitants of Thebes.

O! thou great oracle, &c. The firſt intermede or ſong of the chorus is a ſolemn invocation of Apollo and other deities, intreating them to ſuccour Thebes, and pathetically deſcribing the dreadful effects of the peſtilence. The whole is, in the original, nobly expreſſed, and naturally ariſing from the circumſtances of the drama.

The will of Jove. The oracle of Apollo only interpreted the will of Jove, the great father and ſource of all.

Quæ Phœbo pater omnipotens mihi Phœbus Apollo
Prædixit,

ſays Virgil. Abſurd as the Pagan theology was, we frequently find the antients reſolving all power into one ſupreme Being, called, particularly in Sophocles, by the name of Θεὸν, or the 'God.'

Goddeſs of Thebes, from thy imperial throne
Look with an eye of gentle pity down,
And thou, far-ſhooting Phœbus, once the friend
Of this unhappy, this devoted land,
O! now, if ever, let thy hand
Once more be ſtretch'd to ſave and to defend!

STROPHE II.

Great Thebes, my ſons, is now no more,
She falls and ne'er again ſhall riſe,
Nought can her health or ſtrength reſtore,
The mighty nation ſinks, ſhe droops, ſhe dies:
Stripp'd of her fruits behold the barren earth;
The half-form'd infant ſtruggles for a birth;
The mother ſinks unequal to her pain:
Whilſt, quick as birds in airy circles fly,
Or lightnings from an angry ſky,
Crowds preſs on crowds to Pluto's dark domain.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Behold what heaps of wretches ſlain,
Unburied, unlamented lie,
Nor parents now nor friends remain
To grace their deaths with pious obſequy;
The aged matron and the blooming wife,
Clung to the altars, ſue for added life;
With ſighs and groans united, Pæans riſe;
Re-echoed ſtill doth great Apollo's name
Their ſorrows and their wants proclaim,
Frequent to him aſcends the ſacrifice.

STROPHE III.

Haſte, then, Minerva, beauteous maid,
Deſcend in this afflictive hour,
Haſte to thy dying people's aid,
Drive hence this baneful, this deſtructive, power!

Who comes not armed with hoſtile ſword or ſhield,
Yet ſtrews with many a corſe th' enſanguined field;
To Amphitrite's wide-extending bed,
O! drive me, Goddeſs, from thy favourite land,
Or let him, by thy dread command,
Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Father of all, immortal Jove,
O! now thy fiery terrors ſend;
From thy dreadful ſtores above
Let lightnings blaſt him, and let thunders rend;
And thou, O! Lydian king, thy aid impart;
Send from thy golden bow th' unerring dart;
Smile, chaſte Diana, on this loved abode,
Whilſt Theban Bacchus joins the maddening throng,
O! God of wine, and myrth, and ſong,
Now with thy torch deſtroy the baſe, inglorious god.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS, the People aſſembled.

ŒDIPUS.

YOUR prayers are heard; and, if you will obey
Your king, and hearken to his words, you ſoon
Shall

With thy torch, &c. Bacchus is always deſcribed with torches; probably in remembrance of his birth, as being born in flames, when his mother Semele was conſumed by Jove's lightening. We read of 'the λαμπτηρια εορτη, or feaſt of torches,' dedicated to this god. Dacier imagines, that the chorus invoke Bacchus with his torches, becauſe wine and fire are the beſt preſervatives againſt the plague: but this ſeems to be a mere allegorical and viſionary refinement.

Shall find relief; myſelf will heal your woes:
I was a ſtranger to the dreadful deed,
A ſtranger e'en to the report till now;
And yet without ſome traces of the crime
I ſhould not urge this matter; therefore hear me;
I ſpeak to all the citizens of Thebes,
Myſelf a citizen; obſerve me well:
If any know the murtherer of Laius,
Let him reveal it; I command you all;
But if reſtrained by dread puniſhment
He hide the ſecret, let him fear no more;
For nought but exile ſhall attend the crime,
Whene'er confeſſed; if by a foreign hand
The horrid deed was done, who points him out
Commands our thanks, and meets a ſure reward;
But if there be who knows the murtherer,
And yet conceals him from us, mark his fate,
Which here I do pronounce: let none receive
Throughout my kingdom, none hold converſe with him,
Nor offer prayer, nor ſprinkle o'er his head

Let none receive, &c. Sophocles has here given us the ſolemn form of a Pagan excommunication, almoſt as terrible in its circumſtances as a pope's bull: this we find frequently denounced againſt thoſe who are guilty of murther, or any other very henious crime: the antients believed that nothing could prevent or turn aſide ſuch execrations,

——dîra deteſtatio
Nullâ expiatur victimâ Hor. b. 5. od. 3.

We may judge, therefore, what effect this curſe muſt have had on a ſuperſtitious people, when delivered by their ſovereign, and how great their horror and aſtoniſhment, when he himſelf becomes the unhappy object of it.

Nor ſprinkle o'er his head, &c. Before the ſacrifice, it was cuſ-

The ſacred cup; let him be driven from all,
By all abandoned, and by all accurſed,
For ſo the delphic oracle declared;
And therefore to the gods I pay this duty
And to the dead: O! may the guilty wretch,
Whether alone, or by his impious friends
Aſſiſted he performed the horrid deed,
Denied the common benefits of nature,
Wear out a painful life! and O! if here,
Within my palace I conceal the traitor,
On me and mine alight the vengeful curſe!
To you, my people, I commit the care
Of this important buſineſs; 'tis my cauſe,
The cauſe of heaven, and your expiring country;
E'en if the god had nought declared, to leave
This crime unexpiated were moſt ungrateful;
He was the beſt of kings, the beſt of men;
That ſcepter now is mine which Laius bore;
His wife is mine; ſo would his children be,
Did any live; and therefore am I bound, E'en

tomary for thoſe, who partook of it, to waſh their hands together in the luſtral water, with which they were afterwards ſprinkled by the prieſts, by way of purification: to be denied this, was always conſidered as a mark of guilt and infamy.

So would his children be, &c. By this the poet means to inform us, that Laius had no other children by Jocaſta but Œdipus: it ſeems indeed eſſential to this fable, with regard to the conſtitution of the drama, that it ſhould be ſo, for reaſons ſufficiently obvious. Corneille, one of the many unſucceſsful followers of Sophocles in this ſubject, has, notwithſtanding, given Laius a daughter by Jocaſta, whom he calls Dirce, and makes Theſeus in love with her: in the preface to his Œdipus, we find a defence of this epiſode, which to the judicious reader, will yet appear abſolutely indefenſible.

E'en as he were my father, to revenge him;
Yes, I will try to find this murtherer,
I owe it to the ſon of Labdacus,
To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race
Of great Agenor: O! if yet there are,
Who will not join me in the pious deed,
From ſuch may earth withhold her annual ſtore,
And barren be their bed, their life moſt wretched,
And their death cruel as the peſtilence
That waſtes our city! but on you, my Thebans,
Who wiſh us fair ſucceſs, may juſtice ſmile
Propitious, and the gods for ever bleſs!

CHO. O! king, thy imprecation unappaled
I hear, and join thee, guiltleſs of the crime,
Nor knowing who committed it; the god
Alone, who gave the oracle, muſt clear
Its doubtful ſenſe, and point out the offender.

ŒDI. 'Tis true; but who ſhall force the powers divine
To ſpeak their hidden purpoſe?

CHO. One thing more,
If I might ſpeak.

ŒDI. Say on, whate'er thy mind
Shall dictate to thee.

CHO. As amongſt the gods
All-knowing Phœbus, ſo to mortal men
Doth ſage Tireſias in foreknowledge ſure Shine

Say on, &c. In the original, the chorus ſays, 'let me give you 'a ſecond advice,' to which Œdipus replies, 'if you have a 'third, don't omit it.' This puts one in mind of Hamlet's odd reply to Roſencraus, 'we ſhall obey, were ſhe ten times our mother.' Expreſſions ſo uncommon, and purely ideomatical, will not admit of a literal tranſlation: I have, therefore, in this paſſage, varied the phraſe, and retained only the moſt probable meaning of it.

Shine forth pre-eminent; perchance his aid
Might much avail us.

ŒDI. Creon did ſuggeſt
The ſame expedient, and by his advice
Twice have I ſent for this Tireſias; much
I wonder that he comes not.

CHO. 'Tis moſt fitting
We do conſult him; for the idle tales
Which rumour ſpreads are not to be regarded. [deſpiſe.

ŒDI. What are thoſe tales? for nought ſhould we

CHO. 'Tis ſaid, ſome trav'llers did attack the king.

ŒDI. It is; but ſtill no proof appears.

CHO. And yet,
If it be ſo, thy dreadful execration
Will force the guilty to confeſs.

ŒDI. O! no!
Who fears not to commit the crime, will ne'er
Be frighted at the curſe that follows it.

CHO. Behold he comes, who will diſcover all,
The holy prophet, ſee! they lead him hither;
He knows the truth and will reveal it to us.

Enter TIRESIAS.

ŒDI. O! ſage Tireſias, thou who knoweſt all
That can be known, the things of heaven above
And earth below, whoſe mental eye beholds,
Blind as thou art, the ſtate of dying Thebes,

And

By his advice, This circumſtance is artfully thrown in by the poet, as it lays a foundation for the ſuſpicion of Œdipus againſt Creon, and prepares the ſpectators for the enſuing quarrel between them.

Blind as thou art. The antients give us various accounts of the cauſe of Tireſias's blindneſs. Ovid, who is perhaps the beſt poetical authority, tells us, that Tireſias, being appointed by

And weeps her fate, to thee we look for aid,
On thee alone for ſafety we depend;
This anſwer, which perchance thou haſt not heard,
Appollo gave: the plague, he ſaid, ſhould ceaſe,
When thoſe who murthered Laius were diſcovered
And paid the forfeit of their crime, by death,
Or baniſhment: O! do not then conceal
Aught that thy art prophetic from the flight
Of birds or other omens may diſcloſe;
O! ſave thyſelf, ſave this afflicted city,
Save Œdipus, avenge the guiltleſs dead
From this pollution! thou art all our hope;
Remember 'tis the privilege of man,
His nobleſt function, to aſſiſt the wretched.

TIR. Alas! what miſery it is to know,
When knowledge is thus fatal! O! Tireſias,
Thou art undone! would I had never come!

ŒDI. What ſay'ſt thou? whence this ſtrange dejection?

TIR. Let me de gone; 'twere better for us both [ſpeak.
That I retire in ſilence, be adviſed.

ŒDI. It is ingratitude to Thebes who bore
And cheriſhed thee, it is unjuſt to all,
To hide the will of heaven.

TIR. 'Tis raſh in thee
To aſk, and raſh I fear will prove my anſwer.

CHO. O! do not, by the gods, conceal it from us,
Suppliant we all requeſt, we all conjure thee.

TIR. You know not what you aſk; I'll not unveil
Your miſeries to you.

ŒDI.

Jupiter and Juno to decide a difference between them, gave his opinion in favour of the former; upon which, the enraged Juno deprived him of his ſight; and Jupiter, to make him amends, beſtowed on him the gift of prophecy.

ŒDI. Know'ſt thou then our fate,
And will not tell it? mean'ſt thou to betray
Thy country and thy king?

TIR. I would not make
Myſelf and thee unhappy; why thus blame
My tender care, nor liſten to my caution?

ŒDI. Wretch as thou art, thou wouldſt provoke a ſtone,
Inflexible and cruel, ſtill implored
And ſtill refuſing.

TIR. Thou condemn'ſt my warmth,
Forgetful of thy own.

ŒDI. Who would not rage
to ſee an injured people treated thus
With vile contempt?

TIR. What is decreed by heaven
Muſt come to paſs, though I reveal it not.

ŒDI. Still 'tis thy duty to inform us of it.

TIR. I'll ſpeak no more, not though thine anger ſwell
E'en to its utmoſt.

ŒDI. Nor will I be ſilent.
I tell thee, once for all, thou wert thyſelf
Accomplice in this deed; nay more, I think,
But for thy blindneſs, wouldſt with thy own hand
Have done it too.

TIR.

Thou wouldſt provoke a ſtone. This is a cloſe and literal tranſlation of '*πετρᾳ φυσιν συγ' οργανειας*,' 'vel ſaxum irritare queas.' The unlearned reader may probably think the expreſſion too low and vulgar for the dignity of the buſkin: I have, notwithſtanding, preſerved it, becauſe the phraſe could not be varied without departing from the original; beſides that it ſerves, amongſt many other paſſages, to point out the remarkable analogy of the Greek language with our own.

TIR. 'Tis well; now hear Tireſias;
The ſentence which thou didſt thyſelf proclaim,
Falls on thyſelf; henceforth ſhall never man
Hold converſe with thee, for thou art accurſed;
The guilty cauſe of this city's woes.

ŒDI. Audacious traitor, think'ſt thou to eſcape
The hand of vengeance?

TIR. Yes, I fear thee not;
For truth is ſtronger than a tyrant's arm.

ŒDI. Whence did thou learn this? was it from thy art?

TIR. I learned it from thyſelf; thou didſt compel me
To ſpeak, unwilling as I was.

ŒDI. Once more
Repeat it then, that I may know my fate
More plainly ſtill.

TIR. Is it not plain already?
Or mean'ſt thou but to tempt me?

ŒDI. No; but ſay,
Speak it again.

TIR. Again then I declare
Thou art thyſelf the murtherer whom thou ſeek'ſt.

ŒDI. A ſecond time thou ſhalt not paſs unpuniſhed.

TIR, What wouldſt thou ſay, if I ſhould tell thee all?

ŒDI. Say what thou wilt; for all is falſe.

TIR. Know then,

That

Audacious traitor, &c. The character of Œdipus begins now to open upon us, and diſplay itſelf; we find him preſumptuous, ſelf-ſufficient, reſentful and ſuſpicious; his impiety in contemning the prophet of Apollo in this ſcene, and his groundleſs accuſation of Creon in the next, diminiſh our pity for his misfortunes, raiſe a proper degree of terror in the ſpectators, and reconcile us to his approaching fate.

That Œdipus, in ſhameful bonds united
With thoſe he loves, unconſcious of his guilt,
Is yet moſt guilty.

ŒDI. Dar'ſt thou utter more,
And hope for pardon?

TIR. Yes, if there be ſtrength
In ſacred truth.

ŒDI. But truth dwells not in thee:
Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind; thy every ſenſe is loſt.

TIR. Thou doſt upbraid me with the loſs of that
For which thyſelf e'er long ſhalt meet reproach
From every tongue.

ŒDI. Thou blind and impious traitor!
Thy darkneſs is thy ſafeguard, or this hour
Had been thy laſt.

TIR. It is not in my fate
To fall by thee; Apollo guards his prieſt.

ŒDI. Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own?

TIR. Creon is guiltleſs, and the crime is thine.

ŒDI. O! riches, power, dominion, and thou far
Above them all, the beſt of human bleſſings,
Excelling wiſdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppreſs you! this fair kingdom,
Which by the nation's choice, and not my own,
I here poſſeſs, Creon, my faithful friend,
For ſuch I thought him once, would now wreſt from me,
And hath ſuborned this vile impoſtor here,
This wandering hypocrite, or ſharpeſt ſight
When intereſt prompts, but ignorant and blind
When fools conſult him; tell me, prophet, where
Was all thy art, when the abhorred Sphynx
Alarmed our city? Wherefore did not then

Thy

Thy wiſdom ſave us? then the man divine
Was wanting; but thy birds refuſed their omens,
Thy god was ſilent; then came Œdipus,
This poor, unlearned, uninſtructed ſage;
Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
But by his own ſagacious mind explored
The hidden myſtery; and now thou com'ſt
To caſt me from the throne my wiſdom gained,
And ſhare with Creon my divided empire:
But you ſhould both lament your ill-got power,
You and your bold compeer; for thee, this moment,
But that I bear reſpect unto thy age,
I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpoſe.

CHO. You both are angry, therefore both to blame;
Much rather ſhould you join, with friendly zeal
And mutual ardour, to explore the will
Of all-deciding heaven.

TIR. What though thou rul'ſt
O'er Thebes deſpotic, we are equal here;
I am Apollo's ſubject, and not thine;
Nor want I Creon to protect me. No;
I tell thee, king, this blind Tireſias tells thee,
Seeing thou ſeeſt not, know'ſt not where thou art,
What, or with whom: canſt thou inform me who
Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes
'Gainſt thy own race, the living and the dead?
A father's and a mother's curſe attend thee;
Soon ſhall their furies drive thee from the land,
And leave thee dark like me; what mountain then,

Or

What mountain then. In the original, it is, what Citharon? Citharon was the mountain where Œdipus was expoſed when an infant; this, therefore, is a remarkable propriety, but could not be expreſſed in the tranſlation.

Or conſcious ſhore, ſhall not return the groans
Of Œdipus, and echo to his woes?
When thou ſhalt look on the deteſted bed,
And in that haven, where thou hop'ſt to reſt,
Shalt meet with ſtorm and tempeſt; then what ills
Shall fall on thee and thine! now vent thy rage
On old Tireſias, and the guileleſs Creon;
We ſhall be ſoon avenged, for ne'er did heaven
Cut off a wretch ſo baſe, ſo vile as thou art.

ŒDI. Muſt I bear this from thee? away, begone,
Home, villain, home.

TIR. I did not come to thee
Unſent for.

ŒDI. Had I thought thou wouldſt have thus
Inſulted me, I had not called thee hither.

TIR. Perhaps thou hold'ſt Tireſias as a fool,
And madman; but thy parents thought me wiſe.

ŒDI. My parents, ſaidſt thou? ſpeak, who were my pa- [rents?

TIR. This day, that gives thee life, ſhall give thee death.

ŒDI. Still dark, and ſtill perplexing are the words
Thou utter'ſt.

TIR.

This day, &c. That is, 'this day, which ſhall diſcover who 'thy parents are that gave thee life, ſhall alſo, by that diſcovery, 'cauſe thy death, when thou ſhalt be found the murtherer of 'thy father:' he tells him, afterwards, that his virtues had undone him, which was literally true, as his wiſdom in expounding the riddle of the Sphynx, and his good fortune in being ſaved by the ſhepherd in his infancy, gave him the opportunity of committing thoſe crimes which he could otherwiſe never have been guilty of. The affected obſcurity of Tireſias's predictions keeps the ſpectators in a proper ſuſpence, and, at the ſame time, throws an air of ſolemnity over the ſcene, which renders it more intereſting.

TIR. 'Tis thy buſineſs to unriddle,
And therefore thou canſt beſt interpret them.
ŒDI. Thou doſt reproach me for my virtues.
TIR. They,
And thy good fortune, have undone thee.
ŒDI. Since
I ſaved the city, I'm content.
TIR. Farewell.
Boy, lead me hence.
ŒDI. Away with him, for here
His preſence but diſturbs us; being gone,
We ſhall be happier.
TIR. Œdipus, I go;
But firſt inform me, for I fear thee not,
Wherefore I came; know then, I came to tell thee,
The man thou ſeek'ſt, the man on whom thou pour'dſt
Thy execrations, e'en the murtherer
Of Laius, now is here; a ſeeming ſtranger
And yet a Theban; he ſhall ſuffer ſoon
For all his crimes; from light and affluence driven
To penury and darkneſs, poor and blind,
Propped on his ſtaff, and from his native land
Expelled; I ſee him in a foreign clime
A helpleſs wanderer; to his ſons at once,
A father, and a brother; child, and huſband
Of her from whom he ſprang: adulterous,
Inceſtous parricide, now fare thee well;
Go, learn the truth, and if it be not ſo,
Say I have ne'er deſerved the name of prophet.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the guilty wretch appear,

When will the guilty, &c. This is the ſecond intermede, or

Whom Delphi's ſacred oracle demands;
Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
Dipping in royal blood his ſacrilegious hands?
Swift as the ſtorm by rapid whirlwinds driven,
Quick let him fly th' impending wrath of heaven;
For lo! the angry ſon of Jove,
Armed with red lightnings from above,
Purſues the murtherer with immortal hate,
And round him ſpreads the ſnares of unrelenting fate.

ANTISTROPHE. I.

From ſteep Parnaſſus' rocky cave,
Covered with ſnow, came forth the dread command;
Apollo thence his ſacred mandate gave,
To ſearch the man of blood through every land:
Silent, and ſad, the weary wanderer roves,
O'er pathleſs rocks, and ſolitary groves,
Hoping to 'ſcape the wrath divine,
Denounced from great Apollo's ſhrine;
Vain hopes to 'ſcape the fate by heaven decreed;
For vengeance hovers ſtill o'er his devoted head.

STROPHE II.

Tireſias, famed for wiſdom's lore,
Hath dreadful ills to Œdipus divined;
And as his words myſterious I explore,
Unnumbered doubts perplex my anxious mind,
Now raiſed by hope, and now with fears oppreſt,
Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breaſt: How

ſong of the chorus, who, divided between hope and fear, concerning the murther of Laius, expreſs their ſentiments on this occaſion: their reſpect and veneration for the character of Tireſias, incline them to believe him; whilſt, on the other hand, their regard for Œdipus would perſuade them to queſtion the prophet's veracity; they determine therefore in favour of their ſovereign, and conclude him innocent.

How ſhould theſe hapleſs kings be foes,
When never ſtrife between them roſe!
Or why ſhould Laius, ſlain by hands unknown,
Bring foul diſgrace on Polybus' unhappy ſon?

ANTISTROPHE II.

From Phœbus and all-ſeeing Jove
Nought can be hid of actions here below;
But earthly prophets may deceitful prove,
And little more than other mortals know:
Though much in wiſdom man doth man excel,
In all that's human error ſtill muſt dwell;
Could he commit the bloody deed,
Who from the Sphynx our city freed?
O! no! he never ſhed the guiltleſs blood,
The Sphynx declares him wiſe, and innocent, and good.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

OH! citizens, with grief I hear your king
Hath blaſted the fair fame of guiltleſs Creon!
And moſt unjuſtly brands me with a crime
My ſoul abhors: whilſt deſolation ſpreads
On every ſide, and univerſal ruin
Hangs o'er the land, if I in word or deed

Polybus' unhappy ſon. This circumſtance pleads ſtrongly in favour of Œdipus, who is ſtill ſuppoſed to be the ſon of Polybus, it was not therefore probable, that he ſhould murther a man who had never injured him, and with whom he could have no connection.

Could join to ſwell the woes of hapleſs Thebes,
I were unworthy, nay I would not wiſh
To live another day: alas, my friends,
Thus to be deemed a traitor to my country,
To you, my fellow-citizens, to all
That hear me, O! 'tis infamy, and ſhame;
I cannot, will not, bear it.

CHO. 'Twas th' effect
Of ſudden anger only, what he ſaid,
But could not think.

CRE. Who told him I ſuborned
The prophet to ſpeak falſely? what could raiſe
This vile ſuſpicion?

CHO. Such he had, but whence
I know not.

CRE. Talked he thus with firm compoſure
And confidence of mind?

CHO. I cannot ſay;
'Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
Or judge their actions; but behold, he comes.

Enter ŒDIPUS.

ŒDI. Ha! Creon here? and dar'ſt thou thus approach
My palace? thou who wouldſt have murthered me,
And ta'en my kingdom? by the gods I aſk thee,
Anſwer me, traitor, didſt thou think me fool,
Or coward, that I could not ſee thy arts,
Or had not ſtrength to vanquiſh them? what madneſs,
What ſtrange infatuation, led thee on,
Without or force, or friends, to graſp at empire,
Which only their united force can give?
What wert thou doing?

CRE. Hear what I ſhall anſwer,
Then judge impartial.

ŒDI. Thou canſt talk it well,

But

But I ſhall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt
Is plain; thou art my deadlieſt foe.
CRE. But hear
What I ſhall urge.
ŒDI. Say not thou'rt innocent.
CRE. If ſelf-opinion, void of reaſon, ſeem
Conviction to thee, know, thou err'ſt moſt groſsly!
ŒDI. And thou more groſsly, if thou think'ſt to paſs
Unpuniſhed for this injury to thy friend.
CRE. I ſhould not, were I guilty; but what crime
Have I committed? tell me.
ŒDI. Wert not thou
The man who urged me to require the aid
Of your all-knowing prophet?
CRE. True, I was;
I did perſuade you; ſo I would again.
ŒDI. How long is it ſince Laius——
CRE. Laius? what?
ŒDI. Since Laius fell by hands unknown?
CRE. A long,
Long tract of years.
ŒDI. Was this Tireſias then a prophet?
CRE. Ay! in wiſdom and in fame
As now excelling.
ŒDI. Did he then ſay aught
Concerning me?
CRE. I never heard he did.
ŒDI. Touching this murther, did you ne'er inquire
Who were the authors?
CRE. Doubtleſs: but in vain.
ŒDI. Why did not the ſame prophet then inform you?
CRE. I know not that, and when I'm ignorant
I'm always ſilent.

ŒDI. What concerns thyſelf
At leaſt thou know'ſt, and therefore ſhouldſt declare it.
CRE. What is it? ſpeak; and if 'tis in my power,
I'll anſwer thee.
ŒDI. Thou know'ſt, if this Tireſias
Had not combined with thee, he would not thus
Accuſe me, as the murtherer of Laius.
CRE. What he declares, thou beſt canſt tell: of me,
What thou requir'ſt, myſelf am yet to learn.
ŒDI. Go, learn it then; but ne'er ſhalt thou diſcover
That Œdipus is guilty.
CRE. Art not thou
My ſiſter's huſband?
ŒDI. Granted.
CRE. Joined with her,
Thou rul'ſt o'er Thebes.
ŒDI. 'Tis true, and all ſhe aſks
Moſt freely do I give her.
CRE. Is not Creon
In honour next to you?
ŒDI. Thou art; and therefore
The more ungrateful.
CRE. Hear what I ſhall plead,
And thou wilt never think ſo: tell me, prince,
Is there a man, who would prefer a throne,
With all its dangers, to an equal rank

In

Joined with her, &c. Creon, as brother to the queen, and preſumptive heir to the crown after the death of Laius, had reaſon to think himſelf aggrieved by the marriage of Œdipus, and his ſucceſſion to kingdom of Thebes; a circumſtance which, though unobſerved by the commentators, accounts in the moſt probable manner for the ſtrong ſurpicions of the one, and the warm reſentment of the other.

In peace and ſafety? I am not of thoſe
Who chuſe the name of king before the power;
Fools only make ſuch wiſhes: I have all
From thee, and fearleſs I enjoy it all:
Had I the ſceptre, often muſt I act
Againſt my will; know then, I am not yet
So void of ſenſe and reaſon, as to quit
A real 'vantage for a ſeeming good:
Am I not happy, am I not revered,
Embraced and loved by all? to me they come
Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it:
What then ſhould Creon wiſh for; ſhall he leave
All this for empire? bad deſires corrupt
The faireſt mind: I never entertained
A thought ſo vile, nor would I lend my aid
To forward ſuch baſe purpoſes: but go
To Delphos, aſk the ſacred oracle
If I have ſpoke the truth; if there you find
That with the prophet I conſpired, deſtroy
The guilty Creon; not thy voice alone
Shall then condemn me, for myſelf will join
In the juſt ſentence; but accuſe me not
On weak ſuſpicion's moſt uncertain teſt;
Juſtice would never call the wicked good,
Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice,
Unmerited: to caſt away a friend
Faithful and juſt, is to deprive ourſelves
Of life and being, which we hold moſt dear:
But time, and time alone, revealeth all;
That only ſhews the good man's excellence;
A day ſufficeth to unmaſk the wicked.

CHO. O! king, his caution merits your regard;
Who judge in haſte do ſeldom judge aright.

ŒDI. When they are quick who plot againſt my life,
'Tis fit I ſhould be quick in my defence;
If I am tame and ſilent, all they wiſh
Will ſoon be done and Œdipus muſt fall.

CRE. What wouldſt thou have? my baniſhment?

ŒDI. Thy death.

CRE. But firſt inform me wherefore I ſhould die.

ŒDI. Doſt thou rebel then? wilt thou not ſubmit?

CRE. Not when I ſee thee thus deceived.

ŒDI. 'Tis fit
I ſhould defend my own.

CRE. And ſo ſhould I.

ŒDI. Thou art a traitor.

CRE. What if it ſhould prove
I am not ſo.

ŒDI. A king muſt be obeyed.

CRE. Not if his orders are unjuſt.

ŒDI. O! Thebes!
O! citizens!

CRE. I too can call on Thebes;
She is my country.

CHO.

Not if his oracrs are unjuſt. This republican ſentiment, though extremely well adapted to an Athenian audience, is but ill ſuited to the taſte of an arbitrary government. Mr. Dacier has, therefore, with the true ſpirit of a Frenchman, apologized in his notes for this freedom; he obſerves, that the Chriſtian religion teaches us to obey not only good, but the worſt of, princes; and aſſerts, that to oblige kings to give a reaſon for their actions, is the higheſt injuſtice, being, in fact, no leſs a crime than to turn kings into ſubjects, and ſubjects into kings: were an Engliſhman to comment on this paſſage, he would perhaps be of a direct contrary opinion, and prefer the ſentiment of Sophocles to that of the French critic.

CHO. O! no more, my lords,
For ſee, Jocaſta comes in happieſt hour
To end your conteſt.

Enter JOCASTA.

JOC. Whence this ſudden tumult?
O! princes, is this well? at ſuch a time
With idle broils to multiply the woes
Of wretched Thebes! Home, home, for ſhame, nor thus
With private quarrel ſwell the public ruin.

CRE. Siſter, thy huſband hath moſt baſely uſed me;
He threatens me with baniſhment or death.

ŒDI. I do confeſs it; for he did conſpire
With vile and wicked arts againſt my life.

CRE. O! may I never proſper, but, accurſed,
Unpitied, periſh if I ever did.

JOC. Believe him, Œdipus; revere the Gods
Whom he conteſts, if thou doſt love Jocaſta;
Thy ſubjects beg it of thee.

CHO. Hear, O! king;
Conſider, we entreat thee.

ŒDI. What wouldſt have?
Think you I'll e'er ſubmit to him?

CHO. Revere
His character, his oath, both pleading for him.

ŒDI. But know you what you aſk?

CHO. We do.

ŒDI. What is it?

CHO. We aſk thee to believe a guiltleſs friend,
Nor caſt him forth diſhonoured thus, on ſlight
Suſpicion's weak ſurmiſe.

ŒDI. Requeſting this,
You do requeſt my baniſhment, or death.

CHO. No; by yon leader of the heavenly hoſt,

Th'

Th' immortal ſun, I had not ſuch a thought;
I only felt for Thebes' diſtreſsful ſtate,
And would not have it by domeſtic ſtrife
Embittered thus.

ŒDI. Why, let him then depart:
If Œdipus muſt die, or leave his country,
For ſhameful exile, be it ſo; I yield
To thy requeſt, not his; for hateful ſtill
Shall Creon ever be.

CRE. Thy ſtubborn ſoul
Bends with reluctance, and, when anger fires it,
Is terrible; but natures formed like thine
Are their own puniſhment.

ŒDI. Wilt thou not hence?
Wilt not be gone?

CRE. I go; thou know'ſt me not;
But theſe will do me juſtice. [*Exit* Creon.

CHO. Princeſs, now,
Perſuade him to retire.

JOC. Firſt, let me know
The cauſe of this diſſenſion.

CHO. From reports
Uncertain, and ſuſpicions moſt injurious,
The quarrel roſe.

JOC. Was th' accuſation mutual?

CHO. It was.

JOC. What followed then?

CHO. Aſk me no more;
Enough's already known; we'll not repeat
The woes of hapleſs Thebes.

ŒDI. You are all blind,
Inſenſible, unjuſt; you love me not,
Yet boaſt your piety.

CHO.

CHO. I ſaid before,
Again I ſay, that not to love my king
Even as myſelf would mark me for the worſt
Of men; for thou didſt ſave expiring Thebes:
O! riſe once more, protect, preſerve thy country!
JOC. O! king, inform me, whence this ſtrange diſſen-
ŒDI. I'll tell thee, my Jocaſta, for thou know'ſt [ſion?
The love I bear thee, what this wicked Creon
Did artfully deviſe againſt me.
JOC. Speak it,
If he indeed be guilty.
ŒDI. Creon ſays
That I did murther Laius.
JOC. Spake he this,
As knowing it himſelf, or from another?
ŒDI. He had ſuborned that evil-working prieſt;
And ſharpens every tongue againſt his king.
JOC. Let not a fear perplex thee, Œdipus;
Mortals know nothing of futurity,
And theſe prophetic ſeers are all impoſtors;
I'll prove it to thee: know then, Laius once,
Not from Apollo, but his prieſts, received
An oracle, which ſaid, it was decreed
He ſhould be ſlain by his own ſon, the offspring
Of Laius and Jocaſta; yet he fell
By ſtrangers, murthered, for ſo fame reports,
By robbers in the place where three ways meet:
A ſon was born, but ere three days had paſt,
The infant's feet were bored; a ſervant took
And left him on the pathleſs mountain's top,
To periſh there: thus Phœbus ne'er decreed
That he ſhould kill his father, or that Laius,
Which much he feared, ſhould by his ſon be ſlain;

Such

Such is the truth of oracles; henceforth
Regard them not; what heaven would have us know,
It can with eaſe unfold, and will reveal it.

ŒDI. What thou haſt ſaid, Jocaſta, much diſturbs me;
I tremble at it.

JOC. Wherefore ſhouldſt thou fear?

ŒDI. Methought I heard thee ſay, Laius was ſlain
Where three ways meet.

JOC. 'Twas ſo reported then,
And is ſo ſtill.

ŒDI. Where happened the misfortune?

JOC. In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead
To Delphi and to Daulia.

ŒDI. How long ſince?

JOC. A little time ere you began to reign
O'er Thebes, we heard it.

ŒDI. O! almighty Jove!
What wilt thou do with me?

JOC. Why talk'ſt thou thus?

ŒDI. Aſk me no more; but tell me of this Laius,
What was his age, and ſtature?

JOC.

What thou haſt ſaid, &c. The conduct of the fable, throughout this play, cannot be ſufficiently admired; every thing advanced by Jocaſta, to deſtroy the force of the oracle, tends to confirm it; and every argument which ſhe brings to remove the fears of Œdipus, increaſes them: the whole viſibly calculated to impreſs this moral and religious truth on the minds of the audience, viz. that whatever is decreed by divine Providence muſt inevitably come to paſs; and that all the means which are made uſe of by men to counteract its deſigns, do, in the end, only promote and forward the accompliſhment of them; nothing can be more intereſting than the following ſcene between Œdipus and Jocaſta.

Joc. He was tall;
His hairs juſt turning to the ſilver hue;
His form not much unlike thy own.

ŒDI. O! me!
Sure I have called down curſes on myſelf
Unknowing.

Joc. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou, Œdipus!
I tremble whilſt I look on thee.

ŒDI. O! much
I fear, the prophet ſaw too well; but ſay,
One thing will make it clear.

Joc. I dread to hear it;
Yet ſpeak, and I will tell thee.

ŒDI. Went he forth
With few attendants, or a numerous train,
In kingly pomp?

Joc. They were but five in all;
The herald with them; but one chariot there,
Which carried Laius.

ŒDI. O! 'tis but too plain:
Who brought the news? Joc.

With few attendants. Dacier laughs, with ſome reaſon, at the abſurdity of Seneca, who, in his ridiculous refinement on Sophocles, equips Laius with a large retinue; but informs us, that great part of his guards loſt their way, and left his majeſty with only two or three footmen in a bye-place. 'Voila (ſays 'the French critic) une belle invention, de faire égarer les 'gardes dans un voyage de Thebes à Delphes, cèſt à dire, dans 'un chemin auſſi connue que celui de Paris à Verſailles, & 'perſqu' auſſi frequenté.' Mr. Dacier is right in his criticiſm; but to expoſe the errors of Seneca, would be an endleſs and unneceſſary taſk; the trueſt idea of the merit of Sophocles might, perhaps, be formed by an accurate compariſon of his Œdipus with that of his Roman rival.

Joc. A ſervant, who alone
Eſcaped with life.

ŒDI. That ſervant, is he here?

Joc. O! no! his maſter ſlain, when he returned
And ſaw thee on the throne of Thebes, with prayer
Moſt earneſt he beſeeched me to diſmiſs him,
That he might leave this city, where he wiſhed
No longer to be ſeen, but to retire,
And feed my flocks; I granted his requeſt;
For that and more his honeſt ſervices
Had merited.

ŒDI. I beg he may be ſent for
Immediately.

Joc. He ſhall; but wherefore is it?

ŒDI. I fear thou'ſt ſaid too much, and therefore wiſh
To ſee him.

Joc. He ſhall come; but, O! my lord,
Am I not worthy to be told the cauſe
Of this diſtreſs?

ŒDI. Thou art, and I will tell thee;
Thou art my hope; to whom ſhould I impart
My ſorrows, but to thee? Know then, Jacaſta,
I am the ſon of Polybus, who reigns
At Corinth, and the Dorian Merope
His queen; there long I held the foremoſt rank,
Honoured and happy, when a ſtrange event,
(For ſtrange it was, though little meriting
The deep concern I felt) alarmed me much;
A drunken reveller at a feaſt proclaimed
That I was only the ſuppoſed ſon
Of Corinth's king; ſcarce could I bear that day
The vile reproach; the next, I ſought my parents,
And aſked of them the truth; they too, enraged,

Reſented

Reſented much the baſe indignity;
I liked their tender warmth, but ſtill I felt
A ſecret anguiſh, and, unknown to them,
Sought out the Pythian oracle; in vain,
Touching my parents, nothing could I learn;
But dreadful were the miſeries it denounced
Againſt me; 'twas my fate, Apollo ſaid,
To wed my mother, to produce a race
Accurſed and abhorred; and laſt, to ſlay
My father who begat me; ſad decree!
Leſt I ſhould e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
Inſtant I fled from Corinth, by the ſtars
Guiding my hapleſs journey to the place
Where thou report'ſt this wretched king was ſlain;
But I will tell thee the whole truth; at length
I came to where the three ways meet; when, lo!
A herald, with another man like him
Whom thou deſcrib'ſt, and in a chariot, met me;
Both ſtrove with violence to drive me back;
Enraged, I ſtruck the charioteer, when ſtrait,
As I advanced, the old man ſaw, and twice
Smote me o' th' head, but dearly ſoon repaid

The

By the ſtars, &c. Moſt of the commentators on this paſſage have conſidered it merely as a proverbial expreſſion, applied in general to all who made long and dangerous journies, and only alluding to the cuſtom of navigators, who were directed in their voyages by the ſtars; but as aſtronomy was in great eſteem amongſt the antients, it is, perhaps, moſt probable that they guided themſelves by land as well as by ſea, according to the courſe and ſituation of thoſe luminaries: there is, therefore, no occaſion to have recourſe to a proverb for the expreſſion, eſpecially as the method of travelling is in practice, in ſome parts of the world, even to this day.

The inſult on me; from his chariot rolled
Prone on the earth, beneath my ſtaff he fell,
And inſtantly expired: th' attendant train
All ſhared his fate: if this unhappy ſtranger
And Laius be the ſame, lives there a wretch
So curſed, ſo hateful to the gods as I am?
Nor citizen nor alien muſt receive,
Or converſe, or communion, hold with me,
But drive me forth, with infamy and ſhame;
The dreadful curſe pronounced with my own lips
Shall ſoon o'ertake me: I have ſtained the bed
Of him whom I had murthered; am I then
Aught but pollution? If I fly from hence,
The bed of inceſt meets me, and I go
To ſlay my father Polybus, the beſt,
The tendereſt, parent; this muſt be the work
Of ſome malignant power: ye righteous gods,
Let me not ſee that day, but reſt in death,
Rather than ſuffer ſuch calamity.

CHO. O! king, we pity thy diſtreſs; but wait
With patience his arrival, and deſpair not.

ŒDI. That ſhepherd is my only hope: Jocaſta,
Would he were here!

Joc.

My father Polybus, &c. The plot advances gradually, and as it were inſenſibly, to the utmoſt point of perfection: Œdipus is already but too well convinced that he is the murtherer of Laius, but ſtill believes himſelf the ſon of Polybus and Merope. If the caſual murther of a ſtranger, and the marriage of his widow, makes him ſo unhappy, what will be his condition, when he diſcovers that ſtranger to be his father, and that widow, his mother.

His arrival. The arrival of the ſhepherd mentioned by Jocaſta, whom we ſhall find of ſignal ſervice in keeping up the attention of the ſpectators, and protracting the cataſtrophe.

Joc. Suppoſe he were; what then?
What wouldſt thou do?

ŒDI. I'll tell thee; if he ſays
The ſame as thou doſt, I am ſafe, and guiltleſs.

Joc. What ſaid I then?

ŒDI. Thou ſaidſt he did report
Laius was ſlain by robbers; if 'tis true
He fell by numbers, I am innocent,
For I was unattended; if but one
Attacked and ſlew him, doubtleſs I am he.

Joc. Be ſatisfied it muſt be as he firſt
Reported it; he cannot change the tale;
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it:
Or grant he ſhould, the oracle was ne'er
Fulfilled; for Phœbus ſaid, Jocaſta's ſon
Should ſlay his father; that could never be;
For, O! Jocaſta's ſon long ſince is dead;
He could not murther Laius; therefore, never
Will I attend to prophecies again.

ŒDI. Right, my Jocaſta; but, I beg thee, ſend
And fetch this ſhepherd; do not fail.

Joc. I will
This moment; come, my lord, let us go in;
I will do nothing but what pleaſes thee.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Grant me henceforth, ye powers divine,
In virtue's pureſt paths to tread!

Grant me, henceforth, &c. This is the third intermede, or ſong of the chorus; who, ſhocked at the impiety of Jocaſta, in queſtioning the truth of the oracle, agreeably to their office and

In every word, in every deed,
May ſanctity of manners ever ſhine!
Obedient to the laws of Jove,
The laws deſcended from above,
Which, not like thoſe by feeble mortals given,
Buried in dark oblivion lie,
Or, worn by time, decay and die,
But bloom eternal like their native heaven!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Pride firſt gave birth to tyranny:
That hateful vice, inſulting pride,
When, every human power defied,
She lifts to glory's height her votary;
Soon ſtumbling, from her tottering throne
She throws the wretched victim down:
But may the god, indulgent, hear my prayer,
That god whom humbly I adore,
O! may he ſmile on Thebes once more,
And take its wretched monarch to his care!

STROPHE II.

Periſh the impious and profane,
Who, void of reverential fear,
Nor juſtice nor the laws revere,
Who leave their god for pleaſure or for gain!

Who

character, declare their abhorrence of ſuch preſumption, and deprecate the wrath of the gods, which muſt inevitably fall on the delinquent: the whole is full of noble and religious ſentiments, adapted to the ſubject.

Periſh the impious, &c. This apparently glances at the conduct of Jocaſta in the preceding ſcene; though the chorus, out of reſpect to their ſovereign, expreſs themſelves in general terms, and rather ſeem to exculpate themſelves than to accuſe her.

Who ſwell by fraud their ill-got ſtore,
Who rob the wretched and the poor!
If vice, unpuniſhed, virtue's meed obtain,
Who ſhall refrain the impetuous ſoul,
The rebel paſſions who controul,
Or wherefore do I lead this choral train?

ANTISTROPHE II.

No more to Delphi's ſacred ſhrine
Need we with incenſe now repair;
No more ſhall Phocis hear our prayer,
Nor fair Olympia ſee her rites divine;
If oracles no longer prove
The power of Phœbus and of Jove:
Great lord of all from thy eternal throne,
Behold how impious men defame
Thy loved Apollo's honoured name;
O! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own.

[*Exeunt.*

If vice unpuniſhed, &c. 'If vice, ſays the chorus, meets 'with the reward of virtue, who will be good and virtuous, or 'why ſhould we ſacrifice to the gods?' We meet with a parallel paſſage in holy writ.

'I was grieved at the wicked (ſays David) I do ſee the ungodly in ſuch proſperity, theſe proſper in the world, and 'theſe have riches in poſſeſſion; and I ſaid, then have I 'cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.' Pſal. lxxiii.

No more to Delphi's, &c. It was uſual to depute certain prieſts from every temple to carry offerings to the temple of Apollo, and to aſſiſt at the aſſemblies of Greece, particularly at Olympia, or Piſa, a city of Elis, in the Peloponneſus, famous for the Olympic games, and the temple of Jupiter.

ACT IV.

JOCASTA, CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

SAGES and rulers of the land, I come
To ſeek the altars of the gods, and there
With incenſe and oblations to appeaſe
Offended heaven: my Œdipus, alas!
No longer wiſe and prudent, as you all
Remember once was, with preſent things
Compares the paſt, nor judges like himſelf;
Unnumbered cares perplex his anxious mind,
And every tale awakes new terrors in him
Vain is my counſel, for he hears me not.
Firſt then, to thee, O! Phœbus, for thou ſtil
Art near to help the wretched, we appeal;
And ſuppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid
Propitious; deep is our diſtreſs; for, O!

We

Sages and rulers, &c. The title of Αναχτες, or rulers, with which Jocaſta ſalutes the chorus, plainly points out to us the age and dignity of thoſe who compoſed it, being only given to the guardians and defenders of their country. Jocaſta, we ſee, alarmed at the deſpondency and miſerable condition of Œdipus, enters with boughs of ſupplication in her hand, and is going with great humility to the temples of the gods, whoſe oracles ſhe had juſt before treated with contempt; ſo natural is the tranſition from open impiety and preſumption, to ſervile fears and enthuſiaſtic ſuperſtition.

Firſt then to thee, &c. The words 'αγχιςος γαρ ει' 'thou art 'the neareſt,' have puzzled the commentators. I have ventured to give them a figurative ſenſe, as moſt agreeable to the context. There is, I think, a propriety in her firſt and particular application to Apollo on this occaſion, as it was probably meant to make amends for her former impiety and contempt of him.

We ſee our pilot ſinking at the helm,
And much already fear the veſſel loſt.

Enter SHEPHERD, from Corinth.

SHE. Can you inſtruct me, ſtrangers, which way lies
The palace of king Œdipus; himſelf
I would moſt gladly ſee; can you inform me?

CHO. This is the palace; he is now within;
Thou ſeeſt his queen before thee.

SHE. Ever bleſt
And happy with the happy mayſt thou live!

JOC. Stranger, the ſame good wiſh to thee, for well
Thy words deſerve it; but ſay, wherefore com'ſt thou,
And what's thy news?

SHE. To thee, and to thy huſband,
Pleaſure and joy.

JOC. What pleaſure? and whence art thou?

SHE. From Corinth: to be brief, I bring thee tidings
Of good and evil.

JOC. Ha! what mean thy words
Ambiguous.

SHE. Know then, if report ſay true,
The Iſthmian people will chooſe Œdipus
Their ſovereign!

JOC. Is not Polybus their king?

With the happy, &c. There is ſomething remarkable in this wiſh; 'may'ſt thou live, not only happy thyſelf, but with thoſe who are ſo!' Sophocles knew that a good mind, even in the midſt of affluence, could enjoy no felicity, whilſt there were ſcenes of miſery and diſtreſs before it; and that all human happineſs is increaſed by participation.

The Iſthmian people. The people of Corinth; ſo called from the famous iſthmus there.

SHE. No; Polybus is dead.
JOC. What ſay'ſt thou? dead?
SHE. If I ſpeak falſely, may death ſeize on me?
JOC. [to one of her attendants.]
Why fly'ſt thou not to tell thy maſter? hence!
What are you now, you oracles divine!
Where is your truth? the fearful Œdipus,
From Corinth fled, leſt he ſhould ſlay the king,
This Polybus, who periſhed, not by him,
But by the hand of heaven.

Enter ŒDIPUS.

ŒDI. My dear Jocaſta,
Why haſt thou called me hither?
JOC. Hear this man,
And when thou hear'ſt him, mark what faith is due
To your revered oracles.
ŒDI. What is he?
And what doth he report?
JOC. He comes from Corinth;
And ſays, thy father Polybus is dead.
ŒDI. What ſay'ſt thou, ſtranger? ſpeak to me, O! ſpeak.
SHE. If touching this thou firſt deſir'ſt my anſwer;
Know, he is dead.
ŒDI. How died he? ſay, by treaſon.
Or ſome diſeaſe?

SHE.

Polybus is dead. This peripetie, or change of fortune, ariſing ſo naturally, and ſo agreeably bringing on the cataſtrophe, has been deſervedly celebrated by the critics: the news of Polybus's death, and the diſcovery of his not being the father of Œdipus, inſtead of delivering that unfortunate king from all his fears, becomes the means of diſplaying his guilt, and involving him in ruin and deſtruction: nothing, as Ariſtotle obſerves, can be more completely tragical.

SHE. Alas! a little force
Will lay to reſt the weary limbs of age.
ŒDI. Diſtemper then did kill him?
SHE. That in part,
And part a length of years that wore him down.
ŒDI. Now, my Jocaſta, who ſhall henceforth truſt
To prophecies, and ſeers, and clamorous birds
With their vain omens: they who had decreed
That I ſhould kill my father? he, thou ſeeſt
Beneath the earth lies buried, whilſt I live
In ſafety here, and guiltleſs of his blood:
Unleſs, perhaps, ſorrow for the loſs of me
Shortened his days, thus only could I kill
My father; but he's gone, and to the ſhades
Hath carried with him thoſe vain oracles
Of fancied ill, no longer worth my care.
JOC. Did I not ſay it would be thus?
ŒDI. Thou didſt;
But I was full of fears.

Unleſs, perhaps, &c. This is merely, as it were, in triumph over the prediction, and as a circumſtance too ridiculous to deſerve attention. As ſoon as Œdipus is acquainted with the death of Polybus, his ſuppoſed father, he ſides with Jocaſta, and laughs at the oracle; the event, however, proved the folly of this contempt and impiety, and conveys, at the ſame time, this uſeful leſſon to mankind, viz. that nothing is to be doubted, ridiculed, or called in queſtion, that comes from heaven, how diſputable ſo ever it may appear in the eyes of men, who are unable to comprehend it. If the antient drama may be thought by ſome to fall ſhort of the modern, in ſome leſs important points, we muſt at leaſt acknowledge it, with regard to morality, infinitely ſuperior to our own.

Joc. Henceforth, no more
Indulge them.

ŒDI. But my mother's bed—that ſtill
Muſt be avoided: I muſt fly from that.

Joc. Why ſhould man fear, whom chance, and chance alone
Doth ever rule? Foreknowledge all is vain
And can determine nothing; therefore beſt
It is to live as fancy leads, at large,
Uncurbed, and only ſubject to our will.
Fear not thy mother's bed: oft'times in dreams
Have men committed inceſt; but his life
Will ever be moſt happy, who contemns
Such idle phantoms.

ŒDI. Thou wert right, Jocaſta,
Did not my mother live; but as it is,
Spite of thy words, I muſt be anxious ſtill.

Joc. Think on thy father's death, it is a light
To guide thee here.

ŒDI.

Why ſhould man fear, &c. Jocaſta had already treated the oracle of Apollo with contempt; we are not therefore ſupriſed at the impiety of this ſentiment, which has been embraced by the deſpiſers of religion, from the earlieſt period of time, to this day. When men are once perſuaded that chance, and not Providence, rules all things here below, they naturally conclude themſelves at liberty to follow their own inclinations, without the leaſt regard to the will of heaven: 'Let us eat and drink, 'for to-morrow we die.' The diſcovery of Jocaſta's guilt, and her immediate puniſhment, was apparently deſigned by Sophocles as a leſſon to the freethinkers of his age, and may afford no unprofitable admonition to thoſe of our own.

It is a light, &c. The expreſſion, in the original, is ſomething ſingular, 'μεγας οφθαλμος ὁι πατρος ταφοι,' 'the tomb 'of thy father is a great eye;' *i. e.* an eye by which thou

ŒDI. It is ſo? yet I fear
Whilſt ſhe ſurvives him.
SHE. Who is it you mean?
What woman fear you?
ŒDI. Merope, the wife
Of Polybus.
SHE. And wherefore fear you her?
ŒDI. Know, ſtranger, a moſt dreadful oracle
Concerning her affrights me.
SHE. May I know it,
Or muſt it be revealed to none but thee?
ŒDI. O! no! I'll tell thee; Phœbus hath declared
That Œdipus ſhould ſtain his mother's bed,
And dip his hands in his own father's blood;
Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and lived here,
In happineſs indeed; but ſtill thou know'ſt
It is a bleſſing to behold our parents,
And that I had not.
SHE. Was it for this cauſe
Thou wert an exile then?
ŒDI. It was! I feared
That I might one day prove my father's murtherer.
SHE. What if I come, O! king, to baniſh hence
Thy terrors, and reſtore thy peace!
ŒDI. O! ſtranger,
Couldſt thou do this, I would reward thee nobly.
SHE. Know then, for this I came; I came to ſerve,
And make thee happy.
ŒDI. But I will not go
Back to my parents.

SHE.

mayſt ſee how little oraeles are to be confided in, which, with regard to him, have already proved falſe,

SHE. Son, I ſee thou know'ſt not
What thou art doing.

ŒDI. Wherefore think'ſt thou ſo?
By heaven I beg thee then do thou inſtruct me.

SHE. If thou didſt fly from Corinth for this cauſe—

ŒDI. Apollo's dire predictions ſtill affright me.

SHE. Fear'ſt thou pollution from thy parents?

ŒDI. That,
And that alone I dread.

SHE. Thy fears are vain.

ŒDI. Not if they are my parents.

SHE. Polybus
Was not akin to thee.

ŒDI. What ſay'ſt thou? Speak;
Say, was not Polybus my father?

SHE.

Son, &c. Dacier obſerves, on this paſſage, that the age and condition of the ſhepherd, who had ſaved Œdipus in his infancy, might intitle him to the uſe of this appellation: but remarks, at the ſame time that ſuch familiarity from a ſhepherd to a king would not ſuit with French manners, nor the expreſſion be admitted in the French tongue. Abhorrent, however, as it may be to a French ear, it is by no means diſagreeable to an Engliſh one, as the frequent uſe of it in Shakeſpear and other writers ſufficiently confirm.

If thou didſt fly, &c. This is a continuation of the ſhepherd's laſt ſpeech, who purſues his ſentiment, without regard to the intervening requeſt of Œdipus.

Polybus was not akin, &c. One may eaſily conceive the powerful effect which this firſt diſcovery muſt have had on the mind of Œdipus, and how finely and gradually it prepares the terrible and affecting cataſtrophe. Ariſtotle has, with great truth, therefore obſerved, that nothing could be better imagined than the circumſtance before us. See his Art of Poetry, chap. xi.

SHE. No;
No more than is mine.
ŒDI. Why call me then
His ſon?
SHE. Becauſe long ſince I gave thee to him;
He did receive thee from theſe hands.
ŒDI. Indeed!
And could he love another's child ſo well?
SHE. He had no children; that perſuaded him
To take and keep thee.
ŒDI. Didſt thou buy me then,
Or am I thine, and muſt I call thee father?
SHE. I fouud thee in Cithæron's woody vale.
ŒDI. What brought thee there?
SHE. I came to feed my flocks
On the green mountain's ſide.
ŒDI. It ſeems thou wert
A wandering ſhepherd.
SHE. Thy deliverer;
I ſaved thee from deſtruction.
ŒDI. How! what then
Had happened to me?
SHE. Thy own feet will beſt
Inform thee of that circumſtance.
ŒDI. Alas!
Why call'ſt thou to remembrance a misfortune
Of ſo long date?
SHE. 'Twas I who loos'd the tendons
Of thy boared feet.

ŒDI.

No more than he is mine. In the original, here follow two lines, which have either no meaning at all, or a very fooliſh one, and which I have therefore omitted in the tranſlation.

ŒDI. It ſeems in infancy
I ſuffered much then.

SHE. To this incident
Thou ow'ſt thy name.

ŒDI. My father, or my mother,
Who did it? Know'ſt thou?

SHE. He, who gave thee to me,
Muſt tell thee that.

ŒDI. Then from another's hand
Thou didſt receive me.

SHE. Ay, another ſhepherd.

ŒDI. Who was he? Canſt thou recollect?

SHE. 'Twas one,
At leaſt ſo called, of Laius' family.

ŒDI. Laius, who ruled at Thebes!

SHE. The ſame; this man
Was ſhepherd to king Laius.

ŒDI. Lives he ſtill,
And could I ſee him?

SHE. [pointing to the chorus.] Some of theſe, perhaps
His countrymen, may give you information.

ŒDI. [to the chorus.] O! ſpeak my friends, if any of
This ſhepherd: whether ſtill he lives at Thebes [you know
Or in ſome neighbouring country; tell me quick,
For it concerns us near.

CHO.

Thou ow'ſt thy name. Οιδιπους, or Œdipus, ſignifies, in the Greek, ſwelled-foot, 'διὰ το οιδειν τὰς ποδας,' 'tumor enac-'tus nomen ac vitio pedum,' (ſays Seneca) 'taking his name 'from the ſore and ſwelling of his foot.' This remarkable circumſtance, which ſo ſtrongly confirms the ſhepherd's veracity, awakens the ſuſpicions, and raiſes the curioſity, of Œdipus, who proceeds from queſtion to queſtion, to a full conviction of his own guilt and miſery.

CHO. It muſt be he
Whom thou didſt lately ſend for; but the queen
Can beſt inform thee.

ŒDI. Know'ſt thou, my Jocaſta,
Whether the man whom thou didſt order hither,
And whom the ſhepherd ſpeaks of, be the ſame?

JOC. Whom meant he? for I know not. Œdipus,
Think not ſo deeply of this thing.

ŒDI. Good heaven
Forbid, Jocaſta, I ſhould now neglect
To clear my birth, when thus the path is marked
And open to me!

JOC. Do not, by the gods
I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear,
Make farther ſearch, for I have felt enough
Already from it.

ŒDI. Reſt thou ſatisfied;
Were I deſcended from a race of ſlaves,
'Twould not diſhonour thee.

JOC. Yet hear me; do not,
Once more I beg thee, do not ſearch this matter.

ŒDI.

Who meant he? Jocaſta, already but too well acquainted with the horrid truth, is reduced to a ſtate of ſtupefaction: ſhe pretends, when Œdipus addreſſes her, to be ignorant of all that has been ſaid, and endeavours to diſſuade him from all further inquiry; her advice naturally increaſes that curioſity which it was meant to remove, and leads the unfortunate Œdipus to a diſcovery of the whole.

A race of ſlaves. The original is, ' ϰ'δαν ϰ τριτης εγω μητρος φανω τριδουλος,' ' not if I was thrice a ſlave from a third ' mother,' i. e. not if my mother, with her mother, and grandmother, for three generations back, had been ſlaves. This could not be admitted in the tranſlation.

ŒDI. I will not be perſuaded: I muſt ſearch
And find it too.

JOC. I know it beſt, and beſt
Adviſe thee.

ŒDI. That advice perplexes more.

JOC. O! would to heaven that thou mayſt never know
Or who or whence thou art!

ŒDI. [to the attendant.] Let ſome one fetch
That ſhepherd quick, and leave this woman here
To glory in her high deſcent.

JOC. Alas!
Unhappy Œdipus! that word alone
I now can ſpeak, remember 'tis my laſt.

[*Exit* Jocaſta.

CHO. Why fled the queen in ſuch diſorder hence?
Sorely

Remember 'tis my laſt. The ſilence and departure of Jocaſta, on this occaſion, are extremely judicious, and infinitely preferable to the rhetorical parade of lamentation put into her mouth by Seneca, Corneille, and Dryden; nothing more could, indeed, be ſaid by her with any degree of propriety: ſhe was already convinced of her own and Œdipus's guilt, and in conſequence of it, had reſolved to deſtroy herſelf; 'remember 'tis my laſt 'word;' this, we ſee, is purpoſely expreſſed in an ambiguous manner, and Œdipus does not perceive that ſhe means never to ſpeak to him again. Dacier remarks, that the conduct of Sophocles is truly admirable in this particular; for though it was abſolutely neceſſary that Jocaſta ſhould be preſent at the unravelling of the plot, and diſcovery of Œdipus's birth, it was no longer ſo when the diſcovery was made, as their meeting afterwards would have been ſhocking and indecent: the truth of this obſervation may be juſtified by turning to Seneca, where the reader will ſee how that pompous writer has failed, by leaving his maſter, and truſting to his own weaker genius.

Sorely diſtreſt ſhe ſeemed, and much I fear
Her ſilence bodes ſome ſad event.

ŒDI. Whate'er
May come of that, I am reſolved to know
The ſecret of my birth, how mean ſoever
It chance to prove; perhaps her ſex's pride
May make her bluſh to find I was not born
Of noble parents; but I call myſelf
The ſon of fortune, my indulgent mother,
Whom I ſhall never be aſhamed to own.
The kindred months that are like me, her children,
The years that roll obedient to her will,
Have raiſed me from the loweſt ſtate to power
And ſplendour; wherefore, being what I am,
I need not fear the knowledge of my birth.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

If my prophetic ſoul doth well divine,
Ere on thy brow to-morrow's ſun ſhall ſhine,

Cithæron.

The ſon of fortune. The antients called all thoſe the ſons of fortune who, not knowing their parents, or being of mean extraction, had raiſed themſelves by merit to rank and dignity in the ſtate. Horace, ſpeaking of himſelf, ſays,

'Luſerat in campo fortunæ filius.' Book 2, ſat. 6.

The expreſſion is luckily agreeable to our own idiom, and frequently made uſe of amongſt us to convey exactly the ſame idea. What follows, when Œdipus conſiders himſelf as the offspring of time, and calls the months his brethren, is perhaps the verbum ardens of Tully, or what the French term, idée trop hardie; the ſituation, however, and circumſtances of Œdipus, at this time, may render it more excuſable.

If my prophetic ſoul, &c. Œdipus retreating with the ſhepherd of Corinth, in expectation of the old man; to ſupply the

Cithæron, thou the myſtery ſhalt unfold;
The doubtful Œdipus, no longer blind,
Shall ſoon his country and his father find,
And all the ſtory of his birth be told;
Then ſhall we in grateful lays
Celebrate our monarch's praiſe,
And in the ſprightly dance our ſongs triumphant raiſe.

ANTISTROPHE.

What heavenly power gave birth to thee, O! king!
From Pan, the god of mountains, didſt thou ſpring
With ſome fair daughter of Apollo joined?
Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,
Swift Hermes, ſporting in Arcadia's plains?
Some nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find,
Bacchus, who delights to rove
Through the foreſt, hill and grove,
And art thou, prince, the offſpring of their love?

Enter

intermediate ſpace of time, the chorus advances towards the middle of the theatre, probably near the altar of Apollo. As they are inclined throughout to judge favourably of their ſovereign, they ſeem to wiſh, and almoſt to believe, that he may be found the ſon of ſome divinity. Dacier and Dr. Burton obſerve, that 'the ſtrophe and antiſtrophe coming thus in the middle of the act, 'is ſomething ſingular and uncommon, but that the chorus, in 'this place, do not ſing, but ſpeak.' With all due deference to the opinion of theſe learned gentlemen, I cannot, for my own part, ſee any reaſon why the ſtrophe and antiſtrophe ſhould not be ſung in this place as well as in any other; this is, doubtleſs, the fourth ſong or intermede of the chorus, but the arbitrary diviſion into acts, for which, as I before obſerved, there is no foundation, had puzzled the commentators, and forced them to this expedient, as the beſt method of ſolving the difficulty.

Enter ŒDIPUS, SHEPHERD from CORINTH.

ŒDI. If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
Had converſe with, yon old man, whom I ſee
This way advancing, muſt be that ſame ſhepherd
We lately ſent for, by his age and mien,
E'en as this ſtranger did deſcribe him to us;
My ſervants too are with him; but you beſt
Can ſay, for you muſt know him well.

CHO. 'Tis he,
My lord, the faithful ſhepherd of king Laius.

ŒDI. [To the ſhepherd from Corinth]
What ſay'ſt thou, ſtranger, is it he?

SHE. It is.

Enter OLD SHEPHERD.

ŒDI. Now anſwer me, old man, look this way, ſpeak,
Didſt thou belong to Laius?

O. SH. Sir, I did;
No hireling ſlave, but in his palace bred,
I ſerved him long.

ŒDI. What was thy buſineſs there?

O. SH. For my life's better part I tended ſheep.

ŒDI. And whither didſt thou lead them?

O. SH. To Cithæron,
And to the neighbouring plains.

ŒDI. Behold this man, [pointing to the ſhepherd of
Doſt thou remember to have ſeen him? [Corinth]

O. SH. Whom?
What hath he done;

ŒDI. Him who now ſtands before thee;

I If may judge, &c. Œdipus returns with the ſhepherd of Corinth; as he comes on the ſtage, ſeeing the old ſhepherd with the attendants at a diſtance, and advancing towards him, he addreſſes the chorus.

Call'ſt thou to mind or converſe or connection
Between you in times paſt?
O. Sh. I cannot ſay
I recollect it now.
She. I do not wonder
He ſhould forget me, but I will recall
Some facts of antient date; he muſt remember
When on Cithæron we together fed
Our ſeveral flocks, in daily converſe joined,
From ſpring to autumn, and when winter bleak
Approached, retired; I to my little cot
Conveyed my ſheep, he to the palace led
His fleecy care; canſt thou remember this?
O. Sh. I do, but that is long ſince.
She. It is;
But ſay, good ſhepherd, canſt thou call to mind
An infant, whom thou didſt deliver to me,
Requeſting me to breed him as my own?
O. Sh. Ha! wherefore aſk'ſt thou this?
She. [pointing to Œdipus] Behold him here,
That very child.
O. Sh. O! ſay it not, away,
Perdition on thee!
Œdi. Why reprove him thus?
Thou art thyſelf to blame, old man.
O. Sh, In what
Am I to blame, my lord?
Œdi. Thou wilt not ſpeak
Touching this boy.
O. Sh. Alas! poor man, he knows not
What he hath ſaid.
Œdi. If not by ſofter means
To be perſuaded, force ſhall wring it from thee.

O. Sh.

O. Sh. Treat not an old man harſhly.

Œdi. [to the attendants] Bind his hands. [me do?

O. Sh. Wherefore, my lord? what wouldſt thou have

Œdi. That child he talks of, didſt thou give it to him?

O. Sh. I did, and would to heaven I then had died!

Œdi. Die ſoon thou ſhalt, unleſs thou tell'ſt it all.

O. Sh. Say rather if I do.

Œdi. This fellow means
To trifle with us, by his dull delay.

O. Sh. I do not; ſaid I not, I gave the child?

Œdi. Whence came the boy? was he thy own, or who
Did give him to thee?

O. Sh. From another hand
I had received him.

Œdi. Say, what hand? from whom?
Whence came he?

O. Sh. Do not, by the gods I beg thee,
Do not inquire.

Œdi. Force me to aſk again,
And thou ſhalt die.

O. Sh. In Laius's palace born——

Œdi. Son of a ſlave, or of the king?

O. Sh. Alas!
'Tis death for me to ſpeak.

Œdi. And me to hear;
Yet ſay it.

O. Sh. He was called the ſon of Laius;
But aſk the queen, for ſhe can beſt inform thee.

Œdi. Did ſhe then give the child to thee?

O. Sh. She did.

Œdi. For what?

O. Sh. To kill him.

ŒDI. Kill her child! inhuman
And barbarous mother!
O. SH. A dire oracle
Affrighted and conſtrained her to it.
ŒDI. Ha!
What oracle?
O. SH. Which ſaid, her ſon ſhould ſlay
His parents.
ŒDI. Wherefore gav'ſt thou then the infant
To this old ſhepherd?
O. SH. Pity moved me to it:
I hoped he would have ſoon conveyed his charge
To ſome far diſtant country; he, alas!
Preſerved him but for miſery and woe;
For O! my lord, if thou indeed art he,
Thou art of all mankind the moſt unhappy.
ŒDI. O me! at length the myſtery's unravelled,
'Tis plain; 'tis clear; my fate is all determined:
Thoſe are my parents who ſhould not have been
Allied to me: ſhe is my wife, e'en ſhe
Whom nature had forbidden me to wed;
I have ſlain him who gave me life, and now
Of thee, O light! I take my laſt farewell;
For Œdipus ſhall ne'er behold thee more.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O! hapleſs ſtate of human race!
How quick the fleeting ſhadows paſs

Of

O! hapleſs ſtate, &c, This is the fifth and laſt ſong or intermede of the chorus, who, convinced of Œdipus's guilt, lament the fate of their unhappy maſter in the moſt affecting manner;

Of tranſitory bliſs below,
Where all is vanity and woe!
By thy example taught, O? prince, we ſee
Man was not made for true felicity.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou, Œdipus, beyond the reſt
Of mortals wert ſupremely bleſt;
Whom every hand conſpired to raiſe,
Whom every hand rejoiced to praiſe;
When from the Sphynx thy all-preſerving hand
Stretched forth its aid to ſave a ſinking land.

STROPHE II.

Thy virtues raiſed thee to a throne,
And grateful Thebes was all thy own;
Alas! how changed that glorious name!
Loſt are thy virtues and thy fame;
How couldſt thou thus pollute thy father's bed?
How couldſt thou thus thy hapleſs mother wed?

ANTISTROPHE II.

How could that bed unconſcious bear
So long the vile inceſtuous pair!
But time, of quick and piercing ſight,
Hath brought the horrid deed to light;
At length Jocaſta owns her guilty flame,
And finds a huſband and a child the ſame.

drawing, at the ſame time, from his example, ſome moral reflections on the inſtability of all human happineſs, naturally reſulting from the ſubject, and ſuitable to the occaſion. In juſtice to Sophocles, it may here be obſerved, that the ſongs of the chorus throughout this play are not only in every point unexceptionable, but to the laſt degree beautiful and pathetic.

EPODE.

Wretched ſon of Laius, thee
Henceforth may I never ſee,
But abſent ſhed the pious tear,
And weep thy fate with grief ſincere!
For thou didſt raiſe our eyes to life and light,
To cloſe them now in everlaſting night.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

SAGES of Thebes, moſt honoured and revered,
If e'er the houſe of Labdacus was dear
And precious to you, what will be your grief
When I ſhall tell the moſt diſaſterous tale
You ever heard, and to your eyes preſent
A ſpectacle more dreadful than they yet
Did e'er behold? not the wide Danube's waves Nor

Not the wide Danube's waves, &c. Iſther, or the Danube, is one of the moſt conſiderable rivers in Europe, which paſſing by Illyricum runs into the Euxine ſea. Phaſis was a famous river in Colchis.

The antients imagined that water, and particularly that of freſh or living ſprings, could cleanſe the mind as well as body from pollution; a piece of ſuperſtition which ſeems to have been adopted by the followers of Mahomet, whoſe frequent waſhings conſtitute no inconſiderable part of their religious duty. This calls to mind a ſimilar paſſage in our Engliſh Sophocles, where lady Macbeth, after the murther of Duncan, comes out rubbing her hands, 'out, 'damn'd ſpot, out I ſay; will theſe hands never be white?— 'all the perfumes of Arabia will not ſweeten this little hand.'

Shakeſpear's Macbeth.

Nor Phaſis' ſtream can waſh away the ſtains
Of this polluted palace; the dire crimes,
Long time concealed, at length are brought to light;
But thoſe which ſpring from voluntary guilt
Are ſtill more dreadful.

CHO. Nothing can be worſe
Than what we know already; bring'ſt thou more
Misfortunes to us?

MES. To be brief, the queen,
Divine Jocaſta's dead.

CHO. Jocaſta dead! ſay, by what hand?

MES. Her own!
And what's more dreadful, no one ſaw the deed.
What I myſelf beheld, you all ſhall hear:
Inflamed with rage, ſoon as ſhe reached the palace,
Inſtant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She ſhut the door, then raved and tore her hair,
Called out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy ſon who murthered him,
And ſtained his bed; then turning her ſad eyes
Upon the guilty couch, ſhe curſed the place
Where ſhe had borne a huſband from her huſband,
And children from her child; what followed then
I know not, by the cries of Œdipus
Prevented, for on him our eyes were fixed
Attentive; forth he came, beſeeching us

Voluntary guilt. Alluding to the actions of Œdipus; the murther and inceſt committed by him were involuntary crimes; but his anger, impatience, contempt of the gods, and putting out his own eyes, were voluntary, and therefore, as Sophocles obſerves, more dreadful: doubtleſs no misfortunes are ſo bitter and inſupportable as thoſe which we bring on ourſelves by our own follies.

To lend him ſome ſharp weapon, and inform him
Where he might find his mother and his wife,
His children's wretched mother, and his own:
Some ill-deſigning power did then direct him
(For we were ſilent) to the queen's apartment,
Forcing the bolt, he ruſhed into the bed,
And found Jocaſta, where we all beheld her,
Entangled in the fatal nooſe, which ſoon
As he perceived, looſing the pendant rope,
Deeply he groaned, and, caſting on the ground
His wretched body, ſhewed a piteous ſight
To the beholders; on a ſudden thence
Starting, he plucked from off the robe ſhe wore
A golden buckle, that adorned her ſide,
And buried in his eyes the ſharpened point,
Crying, he ne'er again would look on her,
Never would ſee his crimes or miſeries more,

Or

Some ſharp weapon. Œdipus, in deſpair, deſires them to lend him a ſword, or any weapon to deſtroy himſelf. Dacier obſerves on this paſſage, that it is plain, from hence, that the antients wore no ſwords except in war, and laughs at Seneca for giving one to Œdipus.

Some ill deſigning power. 'Τις Δαιμων,' 'ſome Dæmon.' Brumoy tranſlates it 'quelque noiré divinité.' The antients generally attributed evils and misfortunes to ſome unknown malevolent power.

Looſing the pendant rope. Hanging, though a death much in faſhion amongſt the antients, being at preſent ſo much out of vogue, and entirely baniſhed from our ſtage, ſince the introduction of ſword and poiſon; it is perhaps difficult for the tranſlator to render this paſſage cloſely, without offence to the delicacy of modern ears. My readers muſt, however, excuſe the common and vulgar expreſſions, as I could not alter the manner of Jocaſta's death, without an unpardonable deviation from the original.

Or thoſe whom, guiltleſs, he could ne'er behold,
Or thoſe to whom he now muſt ſue for aid;
His lifted eye-lids then, repeating ſtill
Theſe dreadful plaints, he tore; whilſt down his cheek
Fell ſhowers of blood: ſuch fate the wretched pair
Suſtained, partakers in calamity,
Fallen from a ſtate of happineſs (for none
Were happier once than they) to groans, and death,
Reproach, and ſhame, and every human woe.

CHO. And where is now the poor, unhappy man?

MES. Open the doors, he cries, and let all Thebes
Behold his parents' murtherer, adding words
Not to be uttered; baniſhed now, he ſays,
He muſt be, nor, devoted as he is
By his own curſe, remain in this ſad place:
He wants a kind conductor, and a friend
To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear:
But you will ſee him ſoon, for lo! the doors
Are opened, and you will behold a ſight
That would to pity move his deadlieſt foe.

Enter ŒDIPUS.

CHO. O! horrid ſight! more dreadful ſpectacle
Than e'er theſe eyes beheld; what madneſs urged thee

To

Or thoſe whom, guiltleſs, &c. Meaning his children, whom he could not look on without the terrible recollection of his own guilt.

Or thoſe to whom, &c. Meaning either his children, or Creon, to whom he applies in the laſt ſcene.

O! horrid ſight! Here, we muſt ſuppoſe, the back ſcene opens, and diſcovers Œdipus blind, and in the moſt miſerable condition, advancing ſlowly towards the front of the ſtage; the chorus, ſhocked at ſo moving a ſpectacle, turn their eyes from him; the appearance of Œdipus in this place, was indeed extremely hazardous, as it would have been difficult for a writer of leſs abilities than

To this ſad deed? what power malignant heaped
On thy poor head ſuch complicated woe?
Unhappy man! alas! I would have held
Some converſe with thee, but thy looks affright me;
I cannot bear to ſpeak to thee.

ŒDI. O me!
Where am I? and whence comes the voice I hear?
Where art thou, fortune?

CHO. Changed to miſery,
Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

ŒDI. O! cruel darkneſs! endleſs, hopeleſs night,
Shame, terrors, and unutterable woe!
More painful is the memory of my crimes
Than all the wounds my wild diſtraction made.

CHO. Thus doubly curſed, O! prince, I wonder not
At thy affliction.

ŒDI. Art thou here, my friend!
I know thy voice; thou wouldſt not leave the wretched;
Thou art my faithful, kind aſſiſtant ſtill.

CHO. How couldſt thou thus deprive thyſelf of ſight?
What madneſs drove thee to the deſperate deed?
What god inſpired?

ŒDI. Apollo was the cauſe; He

Sophocles to make him ſpeak with propriety, and ſay neither more nor leſs than he ought. Let the reader compare this ſimple and pathetic ſcene with the bombaſt of the turgid Seneca, who is, to the laſt degree, tedious, in his aukward imitation of it.

Complicated woe. Dacier calls it, 'a deluge of misfortunes.' In the original it is, 'evils greater than the greateſt evils,' which, how beautiful ſoever it may be in the Greek, would not admit of a literal tranſlation.

Apollo was the cauſe. By delivering the oracle, which foretold that Œdipus ſhould kill his father, and afterwards pronouncing the dreadful ſentence againſt the murtherer.

He was, my friends, the cauſe of all my woes;
But for theſe eyes, myſelf did quench their light;
I want not them; what uſe were they to me,
But to diſcover ſcenes of endleſs woe?

CHO. 'Tis but too true.

ŒDI. What pleaſure now remains
For Œdipus? he cannot joy in aught
To ſight or ear delightful. Curſe on him,
Whoe'er he was, that looſened my bound feet,
And ſaved me, in Cithæron's vale, from death!
I owe him nothing: had I periſhed then,
Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
And for myſelf.

CHO. I too could wiſh thou hadſt.

ŒDI. I ſhould not then have murthered Laius; then
I had not ta'en Jocaſta to my bed;
But now I am a guilty wretch, the ſon
Of a polluted mother, father now
To my own brothers, all that's horrible
To nature is the lot of Œdipus.

CHO. Yet muſt I blame this cruel act, for ſure
The loſs of ſight is worſe than death itſelf.

ŒDI. I care not for thy counſel or thy praiſe;
For with what eyes could I have e'er beheld
My honoured father in the ſhades below,
Or my unhappy mother, both deſtroyed
By me? this puniſhment is worſe than death,

And

In the ſhades below. It appears from this paſſage that the Greeks imagined the body after death would remain exactly in the ſame ſtate as before. Œdipus believed that his blindneſs would continue when he was removed to the ſhades below. The ſame opinion, we know, prevailed with regard to the mind alſo.

And ſo it ſhould be: ſweet had been the ſight
Of my dear children, them I could have wiſhed
To gaze upon; but I muſt never ſee
Or them, or this fair city, or the palace
Where I was born; deprived of every bliſs
By my own lips, which doomed to baniſhment
The murtherer of Laius, and expelled
The impious wretch, by gods and men accurſed:
Could I behold them after this? O! no!
Would I could now with equal eaſe remove
My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,
And from another entrance ſhut out woe!
To want our ſenſes, in the hour of ill,
Is comfort to the wretched. O! Cithæron,
Why didſt thou e'er receive me, or, received,
Why not deſtroy, that men might never know
Who gave me birth? O! Polybus, O! Corinth,
And thou, long time believed, my father's palace,
O! what a foul diſgrace to human nature
Didſt thou receive beneath a prince's form!
Impious myſelf, and from an impious race.
Where is my ſplendor now? O! Daulian path,
The ſhady foreſt, and the narrow paſs
Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood,
Shed by theſe hands; do you not ſtill remember
The horrid deed, and what, when here I came,
Followed more dreadful? fatal nuptials, you

Produced

My father's palace. That is, the palace of Polybus, king of Corinth, the ſuppoſed father of Œdipus, who brought him up as his own, and educated him accordingly.

Fatal nuptials, &c. 'Plurals (ſays Longinus in the 19th 'chapter of his treatiſe on the ſublime) impart a greater magnifi-

Produced me, you returned me to the womb
That bare me; thence relations horrible
Of fathers, ſons, and brothers, came; of wives,
Siſters, and mothers, ſad alliance! all
That man holds impious and deteſtable.
But what in act is vile, the modeſt tongue
Should never name: bury me, hide me, friends,
From every eye; deſtroy me, caſt me forth
To the wide ocean, let me periſh there;
Do any thing to ſhake off hated life;
Seize me, approach, my friends, you need not fear,
Polluted though I am, to touch me! none
Shall ſuffer for my crimes but I alone.

CHO. In moſt fit time, my lord, the noble Creon
This way advances! he can beſt determine
And beſt adviſe; ſole guardian now of Thebes,
To him thy power devolves. ŒDI.

'cence to the ſtile, and by the copiouſneſs of number, give it 'more emphaſis and grace; ſo the words of Œdipus in Sophocles.' [Here follows the paſſage] 'all theſe terms (continues the great 'critic) denote on the one ſide Œdipus only, and on the other 'Jocaſta: but the number thrown into the plural, ſeems to mul-'tiply the misfortunes of that unfortunate pair, and excite 'greater and more elevated ideas.'

See Smith's excellent tranſlation of Longinus, p. 61.

But what in act, &c. Œdipus is going on, but ſtops ſhort, as if ſhocked at the bare repetition of his crime, which produces this moral reflection; the ſentiment is adopted by Publius Syrus.

'Quod facere turpe eſt; dicere ne honeſtum puta.'

You need not fear. Alluding to a ſuperſtitious notion amongſt the antients, that it was dangerous even to touch an accurſed perſon, or one ſeemingly viſited with misfortunes by the gods. In the Œdipus Coloneus, we find this religious fear ſtill more ſtrongly impreſſed on the minds of all that come near that unfortunate exile.

ŒDI. What ſhall I ſay?
Can I apply to him for aid, whom late
I deeply injured by unjuſt ſuſpicion?

[*Exit* Meſſenger.

Enter CREON.

CRE. I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes
With vile reproach; I pity thy misfortunes;
But, O! my Thebans, if you do not fear
The cenſure of your fellow-citizens,
At leaſt reſpect the all-creating eye
Of Phœbus, who beholds you thus expoſing
To public view a wretch accurſed, polluted,
Whom neither earth can bear, nor ſun behold,
Nor holy ſhower beſprinkle: take him hence,
Within the palace; thoſe, who are by blood
United, ſhould alone be witneſſes
Of ſuch calamity.

ŒDI. O! Creon, thou,
The beſt of men, and I, the worſt; how kind
Thou art to viſit me! O! by the gods

Let

Holy ſhower. This refers to the curſe pronounced by Œdipus himſelf on the murtherer of Laius, in the ſecond act. It was cuſtomary (as is obſerved in a note on the paſſage) for the prieſts to ſprinkle water on thoſe who aſſiſted at the ſacrifice, and ſometimes, probably, in ſuch abundance as might properly be called 'a ſhower;' this cuſtom of purification we find practiſed in other places as well as Greece, and alluded to in ſcripture: 'then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean 'from all your filthineſs,' Ezek. xxxvi. v. 25. 'Let us draw 'near (ſays the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews) having our 'hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and our bodies waſhed 'with pure water.' Heb. x. v. 22.

Let me entreat thee, ſince, beyond my hopes,
Thou art ſo good, now hear me; what I aſk
Concerns thee moſt.

CRE. What is it thou deſir'ſt
Thus ardently?

ŒDI. I beg thee, baniſh me
From Thebes this moment, to ſome land remote,
Where I may ne'er converſe with man again.

CRE. Myſelf long ſince had done it, but the gods
Muſt be conſulted firſt.

ŒDI. Their will is known
Already, and their oracle declared
The guilty parricide ſhould die.

CRE. It hath;
But, as it is, 'twere better to inquire
What muſt be done.

ŒDI. For ſuch a wretch as I,
Wouldſt thou again explore the will of heaven?

CRE. Thy hapleſs fate ſhould teach us to believe,
And reverence, the gods.

ŒDI. Now, Creon, liſt;
I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb
Be raiſed, and all due honours paid to her
Who lies within; ſhe was thy ſiſter, Creon;

It

The gods muſt be conſulted. As Creon was next heir to the crown of Thebes, if he had, on the conviction of Œdipus's guilt, immediately put in execution the ſentence againſt him without farther conſultation of the oracle, it might have been attributed to his impatient deſire of ſucceeding to the kingdom: this would, in ſome meaſure, have ſtained the purity of his character, which Sophocles has repreſented as blameleſs and unſpotted throughout this whole drama, though he has taken the liberty to change it in another.

It is a duty which thou oweſt: for me,
I cannot hope this city now will deign
To keep me here; O! Creon, let me go,
And ſeek the ſolitary mountain's top,
My own Cithæron, by my parents doomed
Long ſince to be the grave of Œdipus;
There would I die, as they decreed I ſhould:
Alas! I cannot, muſt not, periſh yet,
Till I have ſuffered evils worſe than death,
For I was only ſaved to be unhappy;
But I muſt meet my fate whate'er it be.
My ſons are men, and, whereſoever fortune
May place them, cannot want the means of life;
They ſhall not burthen thee; but, O! my friend,
What will become of my unhappy daughters,
With tendereſt love, beneath a father's hand
Cheriſhed ſo long? O! take them to thy care,
Thou beſt of men! O! might I but embrace them,
But ſhed a tear o'er their diſaſterous fate,
Might I be ſuffered but to touch them here,
I ſhould rejoice, and think I ſaw them ſtill.
But hark! methinks e'en now I hear the voice
Of my dear daughters; hath the gracious Creon,
In pity to my woes, already brought
My children to me; is it ſo?

CRE. It is:
Thy wiſhes are prevented; they are here.

Enter DAUGHTERS of ŒDIPUS.

ŒDI. May heaven reward thee for this goodneſs to me,
And give thee much more bliſs than I have known!
Now, my dear children, come towards me, come

Towards

Now, my dear children, &c. The paſſions of terror and pity

Towards your father and your——brother; ſee
Theſe ſightleſs eyes, pierced by my own mad hands;
Behold that wretched father who begat you
Unknowingly on her who gave me birth;
I cannot ſee you now, I can but weep
Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedneſs
You have to know hereafter: whither now
Muſt my poor children fly? from every feaſt,
Joyleſs, with grief and ſhame ſhall you return;
And when the time ſhall come, when riper years
Should give you to the nuptial bed, who then,
Careleſs of fame, will let his child partake
The infamy of my abhorred race,
Sprung from a wretch accurſed, who killed his father,
And from the womb that bear him did beget
You, my unhappy daughters? ſuch reproach
Muſt ſtill be yours, to virgin ſolitude
Devoted ever, and a barren bed.
Son of Menœceus, thou alone art left
Their father now, for, O! Jocaſta's dead,
And I am——nothing; do not then forſake
Thy kindred; nor, deſerted and forlorn,
Suffer them ſtill, in penury and woe,
To wander helpleſs, in their tender age:
Remember, they have no ſupport but thee.

were never more effectually or more judiciouſly raiſed than in this tragedy: that horror which the ſpectators muſt feel at the crimes of Œdipus, is finely contraſted by this pathetic addreſs to his daughters, which excites the warmeſt compaſſion for his misfortunes, and creates in the mind of the audience that piety and ſubmiſſion to the will of the gods, which the whole drama is viſibly deſigned to inculcate.

O! generous prince, have pity on them, give me
Thy friendly hand in promiſe of thy aid.
To you, my daughters, had your early years
Permitted, I had given my laſt advice:
Too young for counſel, all I aſk of you,
Is but to pray the gods, that my ſad life
May not be long; but yours, my children, crowned
With many days, and happier far than mine.

CRE. It is enough; go in, thy grief tranſports thee
Beyond all bounds.

ŒDI. 'Tis hard, but I ſubmit.

CRE. The time demands it, therefore go.

ŒDI. O! Creon,
Know'ſt thou what now I wiſh?

CRE. What is it? ſpeak.

ŒDI. That I may quit this fatal place.

CRE. Thou aſk'ſt
What heaven alone can grant.

ŒDI. Alas! to heaven
I am moſt hateful.

CRE. Yet ſhalt thou obtain
What thou deſir'ſt.

ŒDI. Shall I indeed?

CRE. Thou ſhalt;
I never ſay aught that I do not mean.

ŒDI. Then let me go; may I depart?

CRE. Thou mayſt;
But leave thy children.

ŒDI.

Leave thy Children. Dacier judiciouſly obſerves, on this paſſage, that every thing dreadful was to be feared from the violent temper and unfortunate condition of Œdipus. Creon was probably apprehenſive, that, in the height of deſpair, he might deſtroy his children; he prudently, therefore, keeps them from him. To

ŒDI. Do not take them from me.

CRE. Thou muſt not always have thy will; already Thou'ſt ſuffered for it.

CHO. Thebans, now behold
The great, the mighty Œdipus, who once
The Sphynx's dark ænigma could unfold;
Who leſs to fortune than to wiſdom owned;
In virtue, as in rank, to all ſuperior,
Yet fallen at laſt to deepeſt miſery.
Let mortals, hence, be taught to look beyond

which remark it may be added, that Œdipus had juſt before delivered his daughters to the care of Creon, who had conſequently a right to diſpoſe of them as he thought proper. Mr. Boivin finds fault with the behaviour of Creon on this occaſion; he makes no ſcruple of condemning the two laſt ſcenes as ſpurious, calls the ſpeeh of Œdipus to his daughters, 'lamentation in 'digne d'un grand perſonnage,' and accuſes him of 'une bizarre 'changement d'humeur & de caractere.' He makes at the ſame time, ſeveral other ſevere, but ill-founded, reflections, on the conduct of the drama, which ſeem to have ariſen partly from his ignorance of Græcian manners, and partly from miſunderſtanding the ſenſe of the original; miſtakes, which it were eaſy to point out; but I refer my readers to the criticiſm itſelf, which they will find in the 9th vol. of the Hiſtoire de l'Academie des inſcriptions, &c. 4to, p. 372.

Let mortals hence, &c. This ſentiment is originally attri- to the wiſe law-giver Solon, and ſaid to have been ſpoken by him to Crœſus. Ovid has turned it this:

ultima ſemper
Expectanda dies homini, dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo, ſupremaque funera debet.

Mr. Boivin poſitively aſſerts, that theſe lines do not belong to Sopocles, but were foiſted in by ſome tranſcriber: he calls them-

The preſent time, nor dare to ſay, a man
Is happy, till the laſt deciſive hour
Shall cloſe his life without the taſte of woe.

'une moralité fade, uſée, & triviale, un lieu commun, qui 'convient indifféremment à la pluſpart des ſujets tragiques' 'a 'piece of inſipid, trite and trivial morality, a common place, 'ſuited equally to almoſt any tragedy.' In ſpite of this ſevere cenſure, I cannot but be of opinion, that the moral is here introduced with the utmoſt propriety, and, though it may indeed be applied to other ſubjects, ſeems peculiarly adapted to this, as it could never be better exemplified and illuſtrated, than by the ſtory of Œdipus in the preceding drama; a performance which reflects the higheſt honour on its author, being perhaps, conſidered in every light, his moſt finiſhed work, and the chef d'œuvre of antiquity.

FINIS.

OEDIPUS COLONEUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS.
CREON.
ANTIGONE,
ISMENE, } Daughters of Œdipus.
POLYNICES, Son of Œdipus.
THESEUS, King of Athens.
An ATHENIAN.
MESSENGER.
ATTENDANTS on Creon, Theſeus and Iſmene.

CHORUS,
Compoſed of Antient Men of Thebes.

SCENE a Grove, at the Entrance to the Temple of the Furies.

OEDIPUS COLONEUS.

ACT I.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE

ŒDIPUS.

WHERE are we now, my dear Antigone?
Know'ſt thou the palace? Will any here afford
Their ſcanty alms to a poor wanderer,

Where are we now, &c. This tragedy is a continuation of the hiſtory of Œdipus, who condemned to perpetual baniſhment, is ſuppoſed to have wandered from city to city, and to arrive at laſt, conducted by his daughter Antigone, at Colonus, a little hill, not far from Athens, where was a temple and grove ſacred to the furies, or, as they are ſtiled, the venerable goddeſſes. The ſubject is extremely ſimple, containing little more than a narration of the principal and moſt remarkable circumſtances attending the death of Œdipus. To taſte the beauties of this piece, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the reader have an eye throughout both to the political and religious ſtate of Greece, and the time of its appearance on the ſtage. Valerius Maximus informs us, that Sophocles wrote it when he was near an hundred years of age, and prefers it, for what reaſon I know not, to all his tragedies. Cicero alſo, who was a much more competent judge, ſeems to have been highly pleaſed with it, and has left us the following remarkable anecdote concerning it, viz. That Sophocles wrote tragedies even in extreme old age; beſtowing ſo much attention on them as totally to neglect every thing elſe; inſomuch that his ſons ſummoned him before the judges as an ideot and dotard, utterly incapable of acting for himſelf; and requeſting that the adminiſtration of his affairs might be taken from him, and put into their hands: the old man appeared in court to defend himſelf againſt the accuſation, and, producing the tragedy

The baniſhed Œdipus? I aſk not much,
Yet leſs receive; but I am ſatisfied:
Long time hath made my woes familiar to me,
And I have learned to bear calamity.
But tell me, daughter, if thou ſeeſt a place
Or ſacred, or profane, where I may reſt,
There ſet me down, from ſome inhabitant
A chance but we may learn where now we are,
And act, ſo ſtrangers ought, as he directs us.

ANT. O! Œdipus, my poor unhappy father,
Far as my eyes can reach, I ſee a city,
With lofty turrets crowned, and, if I err not,
This placed is ſacred, by the laurel ſhade
Olive and vine thick-planted, and the ſongs
Of nightingale ſweet-warbling through the grove;
Here ſit thee down, and reſt thy wearied limbs
On this rude ſtone; 'tis a long way for age
Like thine to travel.

ŒDI. Place me here, and guard
A ſightleſs wretch.

ANT. Alas! at ſuch a time
Thou need'ſt not tell Antigone her duty.

ŒDI. Know'ſt thou not where we are?

ANT. As I have learned
From paſſing travellers, not far from Athens;
The place I know not; would you that I go

And

of Œdipus Coloneus, which he had juſt then finiſhed, aſked the judges, if that appeared to be the work of an ideot. The piece was read, and applauded, the ſon's petition rejected with deriſion, and Sophocles acquitted with honour. We know not what authority Tully had for this ſtory; it may not, however, be amiſs to obſerve, that the bitter accuſations againſt his ſons, which the poet hath put into the mouth of Œdipus, ſeem to confirm the truth of it.

And ſtraight inquire? but now I need not leave thee,
For, lo! a ſtranger comes this way, e'en now
He ſtands before you, he will ſoon inform us.

Enter an ATHENIAN.

ŒDI. Stranger, thou com'ſt in happy hour to tell us
What much we wiſh to know; let me then aſk thee—

ATH. Aſk nothing; ſpeak not till thou art removed
From off that hallowed ſpot where now thou ſtand'ſt
By human footſteps not to be profaned.

ŒDI. To whom then is it ſacred?

ATH. 'Tis a place
Where but to tread is impious, and to dwell
Forbidden; where the dreadful goddeſſes,
Daughters of earth and night, alone inhabit.

ŒDI. Ha! let me hear their venerable names.

ATH. By other names in other climes adored,
The natives here call them Eumenides,
Th' all-ſeeing powers.

ŒDI.

Speak not, &c. Amongſt the antients, not only the temples and altars of the deities, but alſo the groves, foreſts, and vineyards, adjoining to them, were eſteemed ſacred; inſomuch that it was held impious and unlawful for any but the prieſts to enter into them: the Athenian ſtranger, therefore, will not converſe with Œdipus till he is removed from that forbidden ſpot, where he had placed himſelf, into the public path.

The dreadful goddeſſes. Theſe dreadful, or venerable goddeſſes, were the three furies, Alecto, Megæra, and Tiſiphone; daughters, as Sophocles tells us, of earth and night; or, according to other poetical genealogiſts, of Nox and Acheron, ſuppoſed to be the avengers of impiety; as ſuch altars and temples were erected to them. Thoſe who are inclined to allegoriſe the pagan mythology, eaſily transform them into the ſtings of conſcience, which tormented Œdipus.

ŒDI. O! that they would but ſmile
Propitious, and receive a ſuppliant's prayer,
That I might never leave this bleſt abode!
ATH. What doſt thou mean?
ŒDI. It ſuits my ſorrows well.
ATH. I muſt inform the citizens; till then
Remain.
ŒDI. O! do not ſcorn a wretched exile,
But tell me, ſtranger——
ATH. Speak; I ſcorn thee not.
ŒDI. What place is this?
ATH. I'll tell thee what I know.
This place is ſacred all: great Neptune here
Preſides, and he who bears the living fire,
Titan Prometheus; where thou tread'ſt, is called
The brazen way, the bulwark of our ſtate:
From

Great Neptune, &c. Neptune is reported, by the poets, to have ſtruck the earth with his trident, which immediately produced a horſe: in alluſion to this, Colonus, where he was worſhipped, is called the Equeſtrian hill.

Titan Prometheus. Prometheus, according to the tales of the heathens concerning him, was ſuppoſed to have ſtolen fire from heaven, and with it to have made men, or, according to the ſatirical Lucian, which was more criminal, women; for which impiety he was puniſhed by the gods in the ſame manner as the rebellious Titans: he is therefore called, in this place, Titan Prometheus.

The brazen way. Near this brazen way was ſuppoſed to be the paſſage to Hades, or the ſhades, by which Pluto conveyed the raviſhed Proſerpine to his dominions. Some imagined it was ſo called from the brazen mines abounding in that neighbourhood: it was moſt probably a kind of bridge, or narrow paſs for travellers, and lay between the two parts of the ſacred grove, from which the Athenian ſtranger calls to Œdipus.

From this equeſtrian hill, their ſafeſt guard,
The neighbouring villagers their general name
Derive, thence called Colonians all.

ŒDI. But ſay,
Are there, who dwell here then?

ATH. There are, and called
From him they worſhip.

ŒDI. Is the power ſupreme
Lodged in the people's voice, or in the king?

ATH. 'Tis in the king.

ŒDI. Who is he?

ATH. Theſeus, ſon
Of Ægeus, their laſt ſovereign.

ŒDI. Who will go
And tell him——

ATH. What, to come and meet thee here?

ŒDI. To tell him that a little help beſtowed
Would amply be repayed.

ATH. Why, what couldſt thou do,
Dark as thou art?

ŒDI. My words will not be ſo.

ATH. Then mark me, that thou err not; for to me
Thy fortune ſeems ill-ſuited to thy nature,
Which is moſt noble; therefore ſtay thou here
Till I return, I will not go to Athens,
But aſk theſe villagers, who ſojourn here,
If thou mayſt ſtay.

[*Exit* Athenian.

ŒDI. My daughter, is he gone?

ANT. He is, and thou mayſt ſafely ſpeak, for I
Alone am with thee.

ŒDI. Goddeſſes revered!

Since

Goddeſſes revered, &c. One would not imagine that this play,

Since in your ſeats my wearied ſteps have found
Their firſt repoſe, not inauſpicious ſmile
On Phœbus and on me! for know, the god
Who 'gainſt unhappy Œdipus denounced
Unnumbered woes, foretold that here at laſt
I ſhould have reſt, within this hallowed grove,
Theſe hoſpitable ſhades, and finiſh here
A life of miſery: happy thoſe, he ſaid,
Who ſhould receive me, glorious their reward,
And woe to them who ſtrove to drive me hence
Inhuman; this he promiſed to confirm
By ſigns undoubted; thunder, or the ſound
Of dreadful earthquake, or the lightning's blaſt
Launched from the arm of Jove; I doubt it not,
From you ſome happy omen hither led
My proſperous ſteps, that firſt to you I came
Pure to the pure; and here on this rude ſeat
Repoſed

from the appartent ſimplicity and barrenneſs of the fable, which promiſes no more that an account of the death of a poor old man, in an obſcure corner of the earth, could poſſibly produce any incidents that would pleaſe or inſtruct; Sophocles has, notwithſtanding, ſo contrived as to make the buſineſs of this play extremely intereſting to an Athenian audience. Œdipus, as ſoon as he is informed where he is, addreſſes himſelf, in the moſt ſolemn manner, to the deities of the place, recollecting an oracle which, ſince his baniſhment, has declared to him, that this ſpot would put a period to all his woes. We ſhall perceive, that the hero of the drama becomes every moment of more and more conſequence, and that no leſs than the ſafety and proſperity of a whole kingdom depends on this ſeemingly accidental and inſignificant circumſtance.

Pure to the pure. In the original it is 'ſober to the ſober,' alluding to the ſacrifices offered to the furies, in which wine was ne-

Repoſed me, could not be the work of chance;
Wherefore, ye powers! as Phœbus hath decreed,
Here let me find a period of my woes!
Here end my wretched life! unleſs the man,
Who long hath groaned beneath the bittereſt ills
That mortals feel, ſtill ſeem to merit more.
Daughters of antient night! O! hear me now!
And thou, from great Minerva called, the beſt
And nobleſt city, Athens! pity me;
Pity the ſhadow of poor Œdipus!
For, O! I am not what I was.

ANT. No more;
Behold a venerable band approach
Of antient natives, come perchance to ſeek thee.

ŒDI. I've done; Antigone, remove me hence,
And hide me in the grove, till, by their words,
Liſtening I learn their purpoſe; ſuch foreknowledge
Will beſt direct us how to act hereafter.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter CHORUS.

Where is he; look, examine, ſearch around
For this abandoned exile, of mankind
The moſt profane, doubtleſs ſome wretched ſtranger;
Who elſe had dared on this forbidden ſoil

To

ver uſed; becauſe, ſays Dr. Potter, the divine juſtice ought always to be chaſte, ſober and vigilant.

Where is he? This is the firſt appearance of the chorus, who, being acquainted by the Athenian traveller, that there was a man in the ſacred grove, alarmed at ſuch preſumption and impiety, enter in ſearch of Œdipus, who had retired with Antigone to the inner part of the wood. In this, and the following ſcene, the reader muſt enter into, and make allowance for the follies of pagan ſuperſtition.

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To tread, where dwell the dreadful deities
We tremble e'en to name, and as we paſs
Dare not behold, but ſilently revere,
Or ſoft with words of faireſt omen greet.
Of theſe regardleſs here we come to find
An impious wretch; I look around the grove,
But ſtill he lurks unſeen.

Enter ŒDIPUS ANTIGONE.

ŒDI. Behold me here;
For by your words I find you look for me.

CHO. [looking ſtedfaſtly at him.] Dreadful his voice, and terrible his aſpect!

ŒDI. I am no outlaw; do not look thus on me.

CHO. Jove the defender! who is this old man?

ŒDI. One on whom fortune little hath beſtowed
To call for reverence from you; that alas!
Is but too plain; thus by another's eyes
Conducted here, and on her aid depending,
Old as I am.

CHO. Alas! and wert thou born
Thus ſightleſs? full of ſorrow and of years
Indeed thou ſeem'ſt; but do not let on us
Thy curſe devolve; thou haſt tranſgreſſed the bounds
Preſcribed to mortals; ſhun this hallowed grove,
Where, on the graſſy ſurface, to the powers
A welcome offering, flows, with honey mixed,

The

Behold me here. Œdipus and Antigone, overhearing the words of the chorus, and apprehenſive of being ſoon diſcovered by them, leave their retreat, and re-enter the ſtage.

No outlaw. The word outlaw, though not very poetical, ſeems the beſt which our language can afford to expreſs the preciſe meaning of '*ανομος*;' one of whom the laws of his country had expelled from all the benefits and privileges of ſociety.

The limpid ſtream; unhappy ſtranger, hence,
Away, begone: thou ſeeſt 'tis a long ſpace
Divides us: doſt thou hear me, wretched exile?
This inſtant, if thou doſt, depart; then ſpeak,
But not before.

ŒDI. Antigone, my daughter,
What's to be done?

ANT. Obey the citizens;
Give me thy hand.

ŒDI. I will; and now, my friends,
Confiding thus in you, and thus removing
As you directed, let me not be injured.

CHO. Thou ſhalt not; be aſſured that thou art ſafe;
None ſhall offend or drive thee hence.

ŒDI. Yet more
Muſt I approach?

CHO. A little farther ſtill.

ŒDI. Will this ſuffice?

CHO. Remove him this way, virgin;
Thou hear'ſt us.

ANT. Thou muſt follow me, my father,
Weak as thou art; we are unhappy ſtrangers,
And muſt ſubmit; whate'er the city hates
Content to hate, and what ſhe loves to love.

ŒDI. Lead me, my daughter, to ſome hallowed ſpot
For mutual converſe fit, nor let us ſtrive
With dire neceſſity.

CHO.

And now, my friends, &c. Here we muſt ſuppoſe that Œdipus, with the aſſiſtance of his daughter, moves a little way from the place where he firſt ſtood: but the chorus, perceiving that he is ſtill on part of the holy ground, will not converſe with him till he is entirely removed to a ſtone at the extremity of it, which probably lay in the public road.

CHO. Stop there, nor move
Beyond that ſtone.
ŒDI. Thus then?
CHO. It is enough.
ŒDI. Where ſhall I ſit?
CHO. A little forward lean,
And reſt thee there. [Taking hold of him.]
ANT. Alas! 'tis my ſad office,
Let me perform it, to direct thy ſteps;
To this loved hand commit thy aged limbs;
I will be careful. [She ſeats him on the ſtone.]
ŒDI. O! unhappy ſtate!
CHO. Now, wretched ſtranger, tell us who thou art,
Thy country and thy name.
ŒDI. Alas! my lords,
A poor, abandoned exile; but, O! do not——
CHO. What ſay'ſt thou?
ŒDI. Do not aſk me who I am;
Inquire no farther.
CHO. Wherefore?
ŒDI. My ſad race——
CHO. Speak on.
ŒDI. [turning to Antigone] My daughter how ſhall
CHO. Thy race, thy father—— [I proceed?
ŒDI. O! Antigone,
What do I ſuffer?
ANT. Speak, thou canſt not be
More wretched than thou art.
ŒDI. I will, for, O!
It cannot be concealed.
CHO. You do delay;
Inform us ſtraight.
ŒDI. Know you the ſon of Laius?

CHO.

CHO. Alas!
ŒDI. The race of Labdacus.
CHO. O! Jove!
ŒDI. Th' unhappy Œdipus.
CHO. And art thou he?
ŒDI. Be not affrighted at my words.
CHO. O! heaven!
ŒDI. Wretch that I am! what will become of me?
CHO. Away! begone! fly from this place!
ŒDI. Then where
Are all your promiſes? are they forgotten?
CHO. Juſtice divine will never puniſh thoſe
Who but repay the injury they receive;
And fraud doth merit fraud for its reward.
Wherefore begone, and leave us, leſt once more
Our city be compelled to force thee hence.
ANT. O! my kind friends, as you revere the name
Of virtue, though you will not hear the prayers
Of my unhappy father, worn with age,
And laden with involuntary crimes;
Yet hear the daughter pleading for her ſire,
And pity her, who with no evil eye
Beholds you, but, as one of the ſame race,

Th' unhappy Œdipus. Œdipus ſtammers, heſitates, and is with the utmoſt difficulty brought to diſcover himſelf to the chorus; who, agreeably to his apprehenſions, are ſo ſhocked and terrified when they know who he is, that they are even about to retract their promiſe of favour and protection, which they had juſt made to him. They ſeem affraid that his guilt was contagious; and that a man ſo accurſed, would bring down upon them the wrath of the gods; till, mollified by his predictions of future advantages to their country, they relent.

Born of one common father, here entreats
Your mercy to th' unhappy; for on you,
As on ſome god alone, we muſt rely;
Then grant this wiſhed-for boon, O! grant it now,
By all that's dear to thee, thy ſacred word,
Thy intereſt, thy children, and thy god;
'Tis not in mortals to avoid the crime
Which heaven hath pre-ordained.

CHO. We pity thee,
Daughter of Œdipus; we pity him,
And his misfortunes; but, of wrath divine
Still fearful, dare not alter our decree.

ŒDI. Now who ſhall truſt to glory and fair fame?
What ſhall it profit, that your pious city
Was once for hoſpitable rites renowned,
That ſhe alone would pity and relieve
Th' afflicted ſtranger? is ſhe ſo to me
Who drives me hence, and trembles at a name?
Me you can never fear, and for my crimes
I am the ſufferer, not the offender: what
Touching my father I have ſpoke, alas!
If 'tis for that you do abhor me thus,
Was I to blame? the injury received
I but repaid, and therefore had I known
The crime I acted, I were guiltleſs ſtill:
Whither I came, I came unknowingly;
Not ſo they acted who have baniſhed me.
By your commands already here removed,
O! by the gods, preſerve, aſſiſt me now;

If

Your pious city. In this and many other paſſages of the Œdipus Coloneus, Sophocles takes occaſion to compliment his countrymen, the Athenians, and more particularly the inhabitants of Colonus; which is ſuppoſed to have been the place of his nativity.

If you revere them, do not thus deſpiſe
What they decree, their eyes behold the good
And view the evil man, nor ſhall the wicked
Eſcape their wrath: uſe not their ſacred names
To cover crimes, and ſtain the fame of Athens:
As you received the ſuppliant, O! remember
Your plighted faith, preſerve me, ſave me, now;
Look not contemptuous on this wretched form.
Or caſt reproach unmerited; I come
Nor impious nor profane; and with me bring
To Athens much of profit and renown,
As when your king arrives, you all ſhall know;
Mean-time deſpiſe me not.

CHO. Old man, thy words
Are full of weight, and merit our obſervance;
If thoſe who here preſide but know thy purpoſe,
It doth ſuffice.

ŒDI. But ſay, where is the king?

CHO. Within his palace; but a meſſenger
Is gone to fetch him hither.

ŒDI. O! my friends,
Think you a ſightleſs wretch like me will move
His pity or his care, that he will come?

CHO. Moſt readily, when he ſhall hear the name
Of Œdipus.

ŒDI. And who ſhall tell it him?

CHO. The journey's long; but paſſing travellers
Will catch the tale, and he muſt hear it ſoon;
Fear not, thy ſtory is already known
On every ſide, 'twill quicken his ſlow ſteps,
And bring him inſtant hither.

ŒDI. May he come

In happy hour to Athens and to me!
He will; what good man doth not love his country?
ANT. O! Jove! what ſhall I ſay or think? my father—
ŒDI. What ſays my daughter?
ANT. This way bent, behold
On a Sicilian ſteed, a woman comes,
Her face concealed by a Theſſalian veil,
To ſhield her from the ſun; am I deceived,
Or, is it ſhe? I know not what to think.
It is my ſiſter, now ſhe ſmiles upon me;
It muſt, it can be none but my Iſmene.
ŒDI. Who, my Antigone?
ANT. It is thy daughter,
My ſiſter; but her voice will ſoon convince thee.
Enter ISMENE and ATTENDANT.
ISM. O! the ſweet ſounds! a father and a ſiſter!
What pains have I not ſuffered in the ſearch?
And now for grief can ſcarce behold you.
ŒDI. Oh!
My daughter, art thou here?
ISM. Alas! my father,
How terribly thou look'ſt!
ŒDI. From the ſame blood
The father and the daughter.
ISM. Wretched race!
ŒDI. And art thou come, my daughter?
ISM. I have reached thee
With toil and labour.
ŒDI. Touch me, O! my child!
ISM. Let me embrace you both.
ŒDI. Both miſerable! [as yourſelves.
ISM. [They all embrace.] Join then a third as wretched
ŒDI. Iſmene, wherefore art thou come?

ISM.

ISM. My care
For thee, my father, brought me here.
ŒDI. For me?
ISM. That I might ſpeak to thee; this faithful ſlave
Alone conducted me. [pointing to her attendant.
ŒDI. Thy brothers, ſay,
What are they doing?
ISM. They are——what they are;
For, O! between them deadlieſt diſcord reigns.
ŒDI. How like the unmanly ſons of Egypt's clime,
Where the men ſit inglorious at the loom,
And to their wives leave each domeſtic care!
E'en thus my ſons, who ſhould have laboured for me,
Like women idly ſit at home, whilſt you
Perform their office, and with filial care
[pointing to Antigone.
Attend a wretched father; this kind maid,
E'en from her infant days, hath wandered long
An exile with me, and ſupported ſtill
My feeble age; oft through the ſavage woods,
Naked and hungry, by the wintery ſtorms
Or ſcorching heats afflicted, led me on,
And gave me food, unmindful of her own.
Thou too, Iſmene, wert my faithful guard,
When I was driven forth; and now art come
To tell thy father what the gods declare;
A ſtranger now to Thebes, I know not what
Hath paſſed between them; thou haſt ſome ſad news,
I know thou haſt, to tell thy wretched father.
ISM. What I have ſuffered in the ſearch of thee,
I paſs in ſilence o'er, ſince to repeat,
Were but, alas! to double my misfortunes;
I only came to tell thee the ſad fate

Of thy unhappy ſons; a while they ſeemed
As if they meant to yield the throne to Creon,
Nor ſtain their guilty hands with Theban blood,
Mindful of that pollution which remained
On thy devoted race; but now ſome god,
Or their own wicked minds have raiſed a flame
Of dire contention, which ſhall gain the power
Supreme, and reign in Thebes: Eteocles
Hath drove his elder Polynices forth,
Who, now an exile, ſeeks (as fame reports)
The Argians, and, in ſolemn contract joined
With theſe his new allies, would raiſe their fame
Above the ſtars, and ſink our Thebes in ruin.
Theſe are not words alone, 'tis now in act,
Alas! even now I fear, nor know I when
The gods will take compaſſion on thy woes.

ŒDI. Haſt thou no hope they'll pity me?

ISM. I have;
Their oracles have ſaid it.

ŒDI. Ha! ſaid what,
My daughter, tell me, what have they declared?

ISM. The time would come, they ſaid, when Thebes
Muſt ſeek thee, dead or living, for her ſafety. [once more

ŒDI. Why, what could ſuch a wretch as I do for them?

ISM. Their only hope, they ſay, is placed in thee.

ŒDI. I, that am nothing, grown ſo powerful! whence
Can it proceed?

ISM. The gods, who once depreſſed thee,
Now raiſe thee up again.

ŒDI. It cannot be;
Who falls in youth will never riſe in age.

ISM. Know, for this very purpoſe Creon comes;
Ere long thou may'ſt expect him.

ŒDI. What to do,
My daughter?
ISM. To remove thee hence, and place thee
Nearer to Thebes, but not within her borders.
ŒDI. If not within, what can it be
To them?
ISM. Thy tomb, raiſed in a foreign land,
They fear would prove moſt fatal.
ŒDI. But how know they
It muſt be ſo, unleſs ſome god declared it?
ISM. For this alone they wiſh to have thee near
The borders, in their power, and not thy own.
ŒDI. To bury me at Thebes?
ISM. That cannot be;
Thy crime forbids it.
ŒDI. Then I'll never go.
ISM. A time will come when they ſhall feel thy vengeance.
ŒDI. What ſtrange viciſſitude can e'er produce
This wiſhed event?
ISM. Thy wrath, when at thy tomb
They ſhall be forced to meet.
ŒDI. Who told thee this?
Iſmene, ſay.
ISM. The ſacred miniſters
Of Delphos.
ŒDI. Came it from Apollo's ſhrine?
ISM. On their return to Thebes they did report it.
ŒDI. My ſons, did they hear aught of this?
ISM. Both heard,
And know it well.
ŒDI. Yet, impious as they are,
Preferred a kingdom to their father's love.
ISM. With grief I tell thee what with grief I heard.

ŒDI. O! may the gods doom them to endleſs ſtrife;
Ne'er may the battle ceaſe, till Œdipus
Himſelf ſhall end it! then, nor he who bears
The ſceptre now, ſhould long maintain the throne,
Nor Polynices e'er to Thebes return;
They ſhould not live, who drove a parent forth
To miſery and exile; left by thoſe
Who ſhould have loved, ſupported, and revered him;
I know they ſay, the city but complied
With my requeſt, I aſked for baniſhment;
Nor then I aſked it: in my deſperate mind
When firſt I raged, I wiſhed indeed for death;
It had been grateful then, but no kind friend
Would miniſter the boon; at length my grief
Gave way, and when they ſaw my troubled ſoul
Had taken ample vengeance on itſelf,
After long ſtay, the city drove me forth,
And thoſe who could have ſaved me, my baſe ſons,
Deaf to a father's prayers, permit me ſtill
To roam abroad, in poverty and exile:
From theſe alone, far as their tender ſex
Can help me, I receive the means of life,
All the ſweet comfort, food, or needful reſt,
Earth can afford me now; whilſt to my ſons
A throne was dearer than a father's love;
But they ſhall never gain me for their friend,
Ne'er reign in Thebes; theſe oracles declare
They never ſhall; I do remember too
Another prophecy, which Phœbus erſt
Delivered to me: let 'em ſend their Creon,
Or any other powerful citizen,
To drag me hence: my hoſpitable friends,
If to thoſe all-protecting deities

Who

Who here preſide, you too will lend your aid,
Athens ſhall find in me its beſt defence,
And vengeance ſtrike the foes of Œdipus.

CHO. Thou and thy daughters well deſerve our pity:
And, for thy words are full of promiſed good
To our loved city, I will tell thee all
'Tis meet thou ſhouldſt perform.

ŒDI. My beſt of friends,
Inſtruct me; I am ready to obey.

CHO. An expiation inſtant muſt thou make
To the offended powers, whoſe ſacred ſeat
Thou haſt profaned.

ŒDI. But how muſt it be done?

CHO. Firſt, with pure hands, from th' ever-flowing ſpring,
Thy due libations pour.

ŒDI. What follows then?

CHO.

An expiation, &c. The remains of the antient drama, excluſive of their intrinſic merit with regard to its more eſſential parts, are extremely valuable, merely for the inſight which they occaſionally give us into almoſt every religious ceremony practiſed in earlier ages. Nothing can be more preciſe or compleat than this account of an expiation: the cup, which is to be of a peculiar form, muſt be bound with wreaths of wool; that wool muſt be from a new ſhorn lamb; the water drawn from three different fountains, mixed with honey, and every drop poured out; olive boughs muſt be held in the hand, and the whole done in the deepeſt ſilence. However ridiculous or abſurd theſe circumſtances may appear to us, we need not doubt but, on the Athenian ſtage, they muſt have caſt an air of great ſolemnity over this ſcene, and have been well received by a Græcian audience. Our own Sophocles has trod the ſame path with ſucceſs: his witches and fairies fell in with the ſuperſtitions of his cotemporaries, and not only ſecured their attention, but the applauſe and admiration of poſterity.

CHO. Take thou a cup, wrought by ſome ſkilful hand,
Bind it with wreaths around.

ŒDI. Of leaves or threads
Compoſed?

CHO. Of wool, freſh from the new-ſhorn lamb.

ŒDI. Is there aught elſe?

CHO. Then, turning to the ſun,
Make thy libations.

ŒDI. From the cup, thou ſay'ſt?

CHO. The water from three fountains drawn; and laſt,
Remember, none be left.

ŒDI. With that alone,
Muſt it be filled?

CHO. Water with honey mixed,
No wine; this pour on th' earth——

ŒDI. What then remains?

CHO. Take in thy hand of olive-boughs thrice nine;
And offering theſe, begin thy humble prayer.

ŒDI. But how addreſs them? that concerns me near.

CHO. Their name, thou know'ſt, implies benevolent;
Intreat

Olive boughs. Theſe were ſome of the 'κλαδοι ικτηριοι,' or 'ſupplicating boughs,' mentioned in the firſt act of the Œdipus Tyrannus: they were generally laurel or olive.

Vittatæ laurus, & ſupplicis arbor olivæ. Statius.

The number nine was always accounted myſterious, for various reaſons aſſigned by the commentators.

Their name, &c. The furies were called Ευμενιδες, 'Eume-'nides,' i. e. 'favourable or propitious,' for many reaſons given by the ſcholiaſts, &c. none of which are very ſatisfactory: ſome ſay, by an antiphraſis, (like Lucus a non lucendo) being the direct contrary; others give them this appellation becauſe their true names were conſidered as unlucky, and not to be pronounced. They might, after all, perhaps, be called 'Eumenides' in the

Intreat them, therefore, kindly now to prove
Benevolent to thee; this by thyſelf,
Or by another for thee; but, remember,
Low be the voice, and ſhort the ſupplication;
That done, return: be careful to perform it;
I may aſſiſt thee, then with confidence,
But, if thou doſt it not, muſt tremble for thee.

ŒDI. My daughters, heard you this?

ANT. We did; command
What's to be done.

ŒDI. What I can never do,
Powerleſs and blind as I am; one of you,
My daughters, muſt perform it.

ANT. One alone
May do the taſk of many, when the mind
Is active in it.

ŒDI. Hence, then, quick, away;
But do not leave me here alone; theſe limbs,
Without a guide, will never find their way.

ISM. Father, I go: but how to find the place,
I know not.

CHO. Stranger, t'other ſide o'th' grove;
There, ſome inhabitant will ſoon inform thee,
If thou ſhouldſt want aſſiſtance, or inſtruction.

ISM. Mean-time, Antigone, remain thou here,
And guard our father well: cares are not cares
When we endure them for a parent's ſake. [*Exit.*

CHO. Stranger, albeit we know 'tis moſt ungrateful
To raiſe the ſad remembrance of paſt woes,
Yet would we gladly hear———

ŒDI.

ſtricteſt ſenſe, as being favourable to thoſe who had been injured, and the avengers of all impiety.

ŒDI. What wouldſt thou know?
CHO. The cauſe of thy unhappy ſtate.
ŒDI. Alas!
By all the ſacred hoſpitable rites,
I beg thee do not aſk me to reveal it;
My crimes are horrible.
CHO. Already fame
Hath ſpread them wide, and ſtill talks loudly of them;
Tell us the truth.
ŒDI. Alas!
CHO. Let me beſeech thee!
ŒDI. O! me!
CHO. Comply: aſk what thou wilt of me,
And thou ſhalt have it.
ŒDI. I have ſuffered much;
The gods can witneſs 'twas againſt my will;
I knew not of it.
CHO. Knew not what?
ŒDI. The city,
Unknowing too, bound me in horrid nuptials.
CHO. And didſt thou then pollute, as fame reports,
Thy mother's bed?
ŒDI. O! death to hear! I did:
Here, here they are.
CHO. Who's there?
ŒDI. My crimes! my daughters!
CHO. Daughters and ſiſters of their father? Oh!
'Tis horrible indeed.
ŒDI. 'Tis woe on woe.
CHO. Great Jove! both daughters of one hapleſs mother!
What haſt thou ſuffered?
ŒDI. Ills not to be borne!
CHO. Didſt thou then perpetrate the horrid deed?

ŒDI.

ŒDI. O! no!
CHO. Not do it?
ŒDI. I received from Thebes
A fatal gift; would I had never ta'en it!
CHO. And art thou not a murtherer too?
ŒDI. What's that
Thou ſay'ſt?
CHO. Thy father——
ŒDI. Thou add'ſt grief to grief.
CHO. Didſt thou not murther him?
ŒDI. I did: but hear——
CHO. Hear what?
ŒDI. The cauſe.
CHO. What cauſe?
ŒDI. I'll tell thee; know then,
I murthered others too, yet by the laws
I ſtand abſolved; 'twas done in ignorance.
CHO. [ſeeing Theſeus, who enters]
But, lo! the king, Ægean Theſeus, comes;
The fame of thee hath brought him here already.
THE. O? ſon of Laius, long ere this the tale
Of thy diſaſterous fate, by many a tongue
Related, I had heard; thy eyes torn forth
By thy own deſperate hand, and now I ſee
It was too true: thy garb and dreadful aſpect
Speak who thou art: unhappy Œdipus,
I come to aſk, in pity to thy woes,
What's thy requeſt to Athens or to me;
Thine, or this hapleſs virgin on thy ſteps
Attendant, ſpeak; for large muſt be the boon

I would

A fatal gift. Meaning the throne of Thebes, with Jocaſta whom he married.

I would refuſe thee; I have known too well,
Myſelf a wretched wanderer, the woes
Of cruel exile, not to pity thine;
Of toils and dangers, in a foreign land,
Much have I ſuffered, therefore not to me
Shall the poor ſtranger ever ſue in vain
For aid and ſafety: mortals as we are,
Uncertain ever is to-morrow's fate,
Alike unknown to Theſeus and to thee.

ŒDI. Theſeus, thy words declare thy noble nature,
And leave me little to reply: thou know'ſt
My ſtory, whom and whence I am; no more
Remains, but that I tell thee my requeſt,
And we have done.

THE. Proceed then, and inform me.

ŒDI. I come to give this wretched body to thee,
To ſight ungracious, but of worth more dear
To thee, than faireſt forms could boaſt.

THE. What worth?

ŒDI. Hereafter thou ſhalt know, not now.

THE. But when
Shall we receive it?

ŒDI.

Much have I ſuffered. This is almoſt literally tranſlated by Virgil, in his ſpeech of Dido to Æneus:

Me quoque per multos ſimilis fortuna labores
Jactatum, hac demum voluit conſiſtere terra.
Non ignara mali, miſeris ſuccurrere diſco.

Nothing can be more amiable than the character of Theſeus; he receives, pities, and comforts, the unfortunate exile; in return for his generoſity, Œdipus gives him the moſt ſolemn aſſurances of future happineſs, with certain ſucceſs and victory to the whole ſtate of Athens.

ŒDI. When I am no more;
When thou ſhalt bury me.
THE. Death is, it ſeems,
Thy chief concern, and life not worth thy care.
ŒDI. That will procure me all the means of life.
THE. And is this all thou aſk'ſt, this little boon?
ŒDI. Not little is the ſtrife which ſhall enſue.
THE. What ſtrife? with whom? thy children, or my own?
ŒDI. Mine, Theſeus; they would have me back to Thebes.
THE. And wouldſt thou rather be an exile here?
ŒDI. Once they refuſed me.
THE. Anger ſuits but ill
With low eſtate, and miſeries like thine.
ŒDI. Hear firſt, and then condemn me.
THE. Not unheard
All thou canſt urge, would I reprove thee; ſpeak.
ŒDI. O! Theſeus, I have borne the worſt of ills.
THE. The curſes on thy race?
ŒDI. O! no! all Greece
Hath heard of them.
THE. What more than mortal woe
Afflicts thee then?
ŒDI. E'en this: my cruel ſons
Have driven me from my country; never more
Muſt Thebes receive a patricide.
THE. Why then
Recall thee now, if thou muſt ne'er return?
ŒDI. Commanded by an oracle divine.
THE. Why, what doth it declare?
ŒDI. That Thebes ſhall yield
To thee, and to thy arms. THE.

That Thebes ſhall yield, &c. Thoſe who are acquainted with

THE. But whence ſhould ſpring
Such dire contention?

ŒDI. Deareſt ſon of Ægeus,
From age and death exempt, the gods alone
Immortal and unchangeable remain,
Whilſt all things elſe fall by the hand of time,
The univerſal conqueror: earth laments
Her fertile powers exhauſted; human ſtrength
Is withered ſoon; e'en faith and truth decay,
And from their aſhes fraud and falſhood riſe;
Nor friendſhip long from man to man endures,
Or realm to realm; to each, ſucceſſive riſe
Bitter and ſweet, and happineſs and woe.
Athens and Thebes thou ſeeſt united now,
And all is well; but, paſſing time ſhall bring
The fatal day (and ſlight will be the cauſe)

That

the Græcian hiſtory, and the many battles fought between the Thebans and Athenians, will eaſily perceive the deſign of Sophocles in this agreeable flattery of his countrymen. The abbé Sallier has gone ſo far as to make the whole of this tragedy political, and alluding throughout to the circumſtances of the times in which it was written. He fixes the date of it to a particular period of the Peloponeſian war, and endeavours to explain ſeveral paſſages in favour of his opinion; but I refer my readers to his ingenious diſſertation, which they will find in the ſixth volume of the Hiſtoire de l'Academie des Inſcriptions, &c. p. 385.

From age and death, &c. This juſt and beautiful ſentiment is, with great propriety, put into the mouth of Œdipus, whoſe age and misfortunes would naturally incline him to moral reflections, in which the Œdipus Coloneus ſeems peculiarly to abound, and which render this play, perhaps not the moſt intereſting in its circumſtances, at leaſt more inſtructive and agreeable than any of the reſt.

That ſoon ſhall change the bonds of amity
And holy faith, for feuds and deadlieſt hate;
Then buried long in earth, ſhall this cold corſe
Drink their warm blood, which from the mutual wound
Frequent ſhall flow; it muſt be as I tell thee,
If Jove be Jove, and great Apollo true.
But why ſhould I reveal the fixt decree
Of all-deciding heaven? Permit me now
To end where I began; thy plighted faith
Once more confirm, and never ſhalt thou ſay
The wretched Œdipus to Theſeus came
An uſeleſs and unprofitable gueſt,
If the immortal gods have not deceived me.

CHO. O! king, already hath this man declared
The ſame good-will to thee and to our country.

THE. Can I reject benevolence and love
Like this, my friends? O! no! the common rites
Of hoſpitality, this altar here,
The witneſs of our mutual vows, forbid it;
He comes a ſuppliant to theſe goddeſſes,
And pays no little tribute both to me
And to my kingdom; he ſhall find a ſeat
Within my realms, for I revere his virtues:
If here it pleaſeth him to ſtay, remember [to the chorus.
'Tis my command you guard this ſtranger well.
If thou woud'ſt rather go with me thou may'ſt;
I leave it to thy choice. [to Œdipus.

ŒDI. Reward them, Jove.

THE. What ſay'ſt thou, wilt thou follow me?

ŒDI. I would,
If it were lawful, but it muſt be here——
This is the place——

THE. For what? I'll not deny thee——

ŒDI. Where I muſt conquer thoſe who baniſhed me.

THE. That would be glory and renown to this,
Thy place of refuge.
ŒDI. If I may depend
On thy fair promiſe.
THE. Fear not, I ſhall never
Betray my friend.
ŒDI. I will not bind thee to it
By oath like thoſe whom we ſuſpect of ill.
THE. Thou need'ſt not, Œdipus, my word's my oath.
ŒDI. How muſt I act then?
THE. Fear'ſt thou aught?
ŒDI. I do;
A force will come againſt me. [pointing to the chorus.
THE. Here's thy guard;
Theſe ſhall protect thee.
ŒDI. If thou goeſt, remember
And ſave me, Theſeus.
THE. Teach not me my duty.
ŒDI. Still am I fearful.
THE. Theſeus is not ſo.
ŒDI. Know'ſt thou not what they threatened?
THE. This I know,
No power on earth ſhall wreſt thee from this place.
Oft-times the angry ſoul will vent its wrath
In idle threats, with high and empty words,
Which ever, as the mind is to itſelf
Reſtored, are——nothing: they may boaſt their ſtrength,
And ſay they'll tear thee from me; but, I tell thee,
The journey would be long and tedious to them;
They will not hazard it, they dare not: therefore
Be comforted, for if by Phœbus ſent
Thou hither cam'ſt, thou art ſafe without my aid,
E'en if I leave thee ſafe; for know, the name
Of Theſeus here ſufficeth to protect thee. [*Exit.* Theſeus.

CHO.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thou art come in happy time,
Stranger, to this bliſsful clime,
Long for ſwifteſt ſteeds renowned,
Fertil'ſt of the regions round,
Where, beneath the ivy ſhade,
In the dew-beſprinkled glade,
Many a love-lorn nightingale
Warbles ſweet her plaintive tale,
Where the vine in cluſters pours
Her ſweets ſecured from wintry ſhowers,
Nor ſcorching ſuns, nor raging ſtorm
The beauties of the year deform.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Where the ſweet Narciſſus growing,
Where the yellow Crocus blowing
Round the ſacred altars twine,
Offering to the powers divine,

Thou art come, &c. This is the firſt ſong or intermede of the chorus, who in moſt beautiful language (for ſo it is in the original) ſing the praiſes of Attica: the extraordinary fertility of its ſoil, knowledge of horſemanſhip, and ſkill in naval affairs. Sophocles has apparently taken this opportunity to celebrate the place of his birth, and at the ſame time pay a compliment to his countrymen; one may eaſily imagine with what applauſe it muſt have been received by an Athenian audience.

This chorus cloſes the act, which the reader may obſerve, is of a moſt enormous length, and unproportionable to the reſt. Brumoy, to avoid the abſurdity, begins the ſecond act at the firſt entrance of Theſeus, and calls this the ſecond intermede, though he forgets to tell us which is the firſt.

Where the pure ſprings perpetual flow
Watering the verdant meads below,
Which with its earth-enriching waves
The fair Cephiſus ever laves.
Where with his ever-ſporting train,
Bacchus wantons on the plain;
Pleaſed with the muſes ſtill to rove,
And golden Venus, queen of love.

STROPHE II.

Alone within this happy land,
Planted here by nature's hand,
Which, nor Aſia's fertile plains,
Nor Pelops' ſpacious iſle contains,
Pallas, thy ſacred olive grows;
Striking terror on our foes,
Ever free from hoſtile rage,
From wanton youth, or greedy age;
Happy in ſage Minerva's love,
And guarded ſtill by Morian Jove.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But nobler gifts, and fairer fame,
Athens, yet adorn thy name;
Such wonderous gifts hath poured on thee,
Thy great protecting deity:
Here firſt obedient to command,
Formed by Neptune's ſkilful hand;

The

Thy ſacred olive. The olives were called 'Μοριαι,' or 'Moriæ,' for ſome reaſons, not very material, aſſigned by the commentators: it is ſufficent to obſerve, that as the favourite trees of Minerva, the protectreſs of Athens, they were held ſacred, and whoever cut them down was deemed accurſed; for which reaſon, it is ſaid, that when the Lacedæmonians invaded Attica, theſe alone were ſpared in the general devaſtation.

The ſteed was taught to know the rein,
And bear the chariot o'er the plain:
Here firſt along the rapid tide,
The ſtately veſſels learned to ride;
And ſwifter down the current flow
Than Nereids cut the waves below. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

ANTIGONE, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

GREAT are thy praiſes, Attica, and now
The time is come to ſhew thou doſt deſerve them.

ŒDI. What means my daughter? Speak: what new [event
Alarms thee?

ANT. Creon, with a numerous band
Of followers, comes this way.

ŒDI. O! now, my friends,
If ever, help me.

CHO. Fear not, we'll protect thee.
Though I am old, the ſtrength of Attica
Is not decayed.

Enter CREON, with ATTENDANTS.

CRE. Moſt honoured citizens,
I ſee you look with eyes of fear upon me,
Without a cauſe; for know, I came not here
Intending aught of violence or ill
Againſt a city, ſo renowned in Greece
As yours hath ever been; I only came,
Commiſſioned by the ſtate of Thebes, to fetch
This old man back, if by perſuaſion mild
I could induce him to return; not ſent
By one alone, but the united voice
Of a whole people, who aſſigned the taſk

To me, becauſe, by blood united to him,
I felt for his misfortunes as my own.
Come, therefore, Œdipus, attend me home,
Thebes calls thee back, thy kingdom now demands thee,
By me ſhe calls thee; liſten to thy friend,
For ſurely Creon were the worſt of men,
If he could look on woes like thine unmoved;
When I behold thee in a foreign land,
A wretched wanderer, forced to beg thy bread
From place to place, with this unhappy maid,
Whom little did I think to ſee expoſed,
To miſery and ſhame, of nuptial rites
Hopeleſs, and thus bereft of every aid:
O! 'tis reproach and infamy to us
And to our race; but 'tis already known,
And cannot be concealed: O! Œdipus,
I here beſeech thee, by our country's gods,
Return to Thebes, bid thou a kind farewell,
For ſhe deſerves it, to this noble city,
But ſtill remember thy own dearer country.

ŒDI. Thou daring hypocrite, whoſe ſpecious wiles
Beneath fair ſemblance mean but to betray,
Why wouldſt thou tempt me thus; why thus once more
Enſnare me in thy toils, and make me ſtill
More wretched than I am? Long time oppreſſed
By heavieſt woes, I pined within my palace,
And longed for exile, but thou then refus'dſt
To let me go, till ſatiated with grief
My ſoul at length was calm, and much I wiſhed
To ſpend my few remaining years at home;
Then thou, for little did the kindred blood
Thou talk'ſt of then avail, didſt baniſh me;
And now again thou com'ſt to make me wretched,
Becauſe thou ſeeſt this kind benignant city

Embrace

Embrace and cheriſh, thou wouldſt drag me hence,
With ſweeteſt words covering thy bitter mind,
Profeſſing love to thoſe who chuſe it not:
He, who denies his charitable aid
To the poor beggar in his utmoſt need,
And if abundance comes, ſhould offer that
Which is not wanted, little merits thanks.
Such is thy bounty now, in word alone
And not in deed, the friend of Œdipus.
But I will tell them what thou art; thou cam'ſt not
To take me hence, but leave me in the borders
Of Thebes, that ſo thy kingdom may eſcape
The impending ills which this avenging city
Shall pour upon it; but 'twill come to paſs
As I foretold, my evil genius ſtill
Shall haunt thee, and my ſons no more of Thebes
Inherit than ſhall ſerve them for a grave.
Thy country's fate is better known to me
Than to thyſelf, for my inſtruction comes
From ſurer guides, from Phœbus and from Jove.
Thy artful ſpeech ſhall little ſerve thy purpoſe,
'Twill only hurt thy cauſe: therefore begone!
I am not to be perſuaded. Let me live
In quiet here, for, wretched as I am,
'Twill be ſome comfort to be far from thee.

CRE. Think'ſt thou I heed thy words? Who'll ſuffer
For this perverſeneſs, thou, or I? [moſt

ŒDI. I truſt
Thy little arts will nought avail with me,
Or with my friends.

CRE. Poor wretch! no time can cure
Thy follies, thy old age is grown delirious.

ŒDI. Thou haſt a hateful tongue; but few, how juſt
Soe'er they be, can always ſpeak aright.

CRE. But to ſay much, and to ſay well, are things
Which differ widely.
ŒDI. What thou ſay'ſt no doubt
Is brief, and proper too.
CRE. 'Twill hardly ſeem ſo
To thoſe, who think like thee.
ŒDI. Away, nor dare
Direct my ſteps, as if thou hadſt the power
To place me where thou wilt.
CRE. Remember all
To witneſs this, for he ſhall anſwer it
When he is mine.
ŒDI. But who ſhall force me hence
Againſt the will of theſe my friends?
CRE. Their aid
Is vain; already I have done what much
Will hurt thee.
ŒDI. Ha! what threats are theſe?
CRE. Thy daughters
Muſt go with me? one is ſecured, and now
This moment will I wreſt the other from thee.
ŒDI. O! me!
CRE. I'll give thee much more cauſe for grief.
ŒDI. Haſt thou my daughter?
CRE. Aye, and will have this.
ŒDI. [to the chorus] What will you do my friends?
Will you forſake me?
Will you not drive this vile abandoned man
Forth from your city?
CHO. Stranger, hence, away;
Thy actions are moſt ſhameful and unjuſt.
CRE. Slaves, do your office; bear her off by force,
If ſhe conſents not.

ANT.

ANT. Whither ſhall I fly
For aid? What god or man ſhall I implore
To ſuccour me?
CHO. Alas! what wou'dſt thou do?
CRE. I touch not him, but I muſt have my own.
ANT. O! princes, aid me now!
CHO. 'Tis moſt unjuſt.
CRE. I ſay 'tis juſt.
CHO. Then prove it.
CRE. They are mine.
CHO. O citizens!
ANT. O! looſe me? if you do not,
You ſhall repent this violence.
CRE. Go on,
I will defend you.
ŒDI. He, who injures me,
Offends the city.
CHO. Said I not before
It would be thus?
CRE. [to the chorus] Let go the maid this inſtant.
CHO. Command where thou haſt power.
CRE. Let her go.
CHO. Begone thyſelf: what, ho! my countrymen,
The city is in danger; haſte and ſave us.
[Creon's followers ſeize on Antigone.
ANT. I'm ſeized, my friends, O! help!
ŒDI. Where is my daughter?
ANT. Torn from thee.
ŒDI. O! ſtretch forth thy hand.
ANT. I cannot.
CRE. Away with her.
ŒDI. O! wretched Œdipus!

CRE.

CRE. No longer ſhall theſe tender props ſupport
Thy feeble age; ſince thou art ſtill reſolved
Againſt thyſelf, thy country and thy friends,
By whoſe command I come, remain perverſe
And obſtinate, old man; but know, hereafter
Time will convince thee thou haſt ever been
Thy own worſt foe; thy fiery temper ſtill
Muſt make thee wretched.

CHO. Stranger, ſtir not hence.

CRE. I charge you, touch me not.

CHO. Thou ſhalt not go,
Till thou reſtor'ſt the virgins,

CRE. I muſt have
A nobler ranſom from your city, theſe
Shall not ſuffice.

CHO. What mean'ſt thou?

CRE. He ſhall go,
This Œdipus.

CHO. Thy threats are terrible.

CRE. I'll do't; and only he, who governs here,
Shall hinder me.

ŒDI. O inſolence! thou wilt not,
Thou dar'ſt not, force me.

CRE. Hold thy peace.

ŒDI. Not even
The dreadful goddeſſes, who here preſide,
Should bind my tongue from heavieſt curſes on thee,
For thou haſt robbed me of the only light

Theſe

No longer, &c. Meaning his daughters, Antigone and Iſmene: the literal tranſlation would be 'Thou ſhalt no longer walk, leaning on theſe ſticks.' A little farther on, Œdipus calls Antigone 'Φιλον ομμα,' 'his only eye:' paſſages of this nature, the reader will eaſily perceive, muſt be ſoftened a little in the tranſlation.

Theſe eyes could boaſt; but may the all-ſeeing ſun
Behold and puniſh thee and all thy race,
And load thy age with miſeries like mine!

CRE. Inhabitants of Athens, hear ye this?

ŒDI. They do, and ſee that but with fruitleſs words
I can repay the injuries I received;
For I am weak with age, and here alone.

CRE. No longer will I curb my juſt reſentment,
But force thee hence.

ŒDI. O! me!

CHO. What boldneſs, ſtranger,
Could make thee hope to do a deed like this
Unpuniſhed?

CRE. 'Tis reſolved.

CHO. Our Athens then
Is fallen indeed, and is no more a city.

CRE. In a juſt cauſe the weak may foil the mighty.

ŒDI. Hear how he threatens——

CHO. What he'll ne'er perform.

CRE. That Jove alone can tell.

CHO. Shall injuries
Like theſe be ſuffered?

CRE. Call it injury
Thou may'ſt 'tis ſuch as thou perforce muſt bear.

CHO. This is too much: ye rulers of the land,
My fellow-citizens, come forth, and ſave us.

Enter THESEUS.

THE. Whence is this clamour? wherefore am I called
From ſacred rites, at Neptune's altar paid,

Our

For I am weak, &c. This line in the original is, I think, very abſurdly put into the mouth of Creon; I have taken the liberty to give it to Œdipus, from whom it certainly comes with more propriety.

Our guardian god? ſay, what's the cauſe that thus
In haſte I'm ſummoned hither?

ŒDI. O! my friend,
For well I know thy voice, moſt cruelly
Have I been treated by this man.

THE. Who did it?

ŒDI. This Creon, whom thou ſeeſt, have raviſhed
My only help, my daughters. [from me

THE. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou?

ŒDI. 'Tis as I tell thee.

THE. [to his attendants] Quick, diſpatch my ſervants,
Fly to the altar, ſummon all my people,
Horſemen and foot; give o'er the ſacrifice,
And inſtant to the double gate repair,
Leſt with the virgins the baſe raviſhers
Eſcape unpuniſhed, and my gueſt thus injured
Laugh me to ſcorn for cowardice. Away!
Were I to puniſh this oppreſſor here [turning to Creon]
As my reſentment bids, and he deſerves,
He ſhould this inſtant fall beneath my rage;
But the ſame juſtice he to others deals,
Himſelf ſhall meet from us; thou ſhalt not go
Till thoſe, whom thou didſt baſely raviſh hence,
Are brought before me: 'twas unlike thyſelf,
Unworthy of thy country and thy race,
To enter thus a cultivated city,
Where law and juſtice reign, with violence
And rapine, ſnatching what thy fancy pleas'd.
Or didſt thou think I ruled a deſart land,
Or that my people were a race of ſlaves,
And Theſeus but the ſhadow of a king?
Thebes never taught thee ſuch deſtructive leſſons,
For ſhe abhors injuſtice; when ſhe hears
That Creon, thus deſpiſing ſacred laws,

Hath

Hath ta'en with brutal violence my right,
And would have ſtolen a wretched ſuppliant from me,
She'll not approve thy conduct: ſay I went
To Thebes, how juſt ſoever were the cauſe,
I ſhould not ſeize on aught without the leave
Of him who governed there; but, as becomes
A ſtranger, bear myſelf unblamed by all.
Thou haſt diſgrac'd thy country, and thy friends,
And weight of years hath ta'en thy ſenſes from thee:
Again, I ſay, reſtore the virgins to me,
Or ſtay with me thyſelf, for ſo thou ſhalt,
Howe'er unwilling: what I've ſaid, remember,
Is what I have reſolved, therefore determine.

CHO. [to Creon] Stranger, thy actions, noble as thou art,
But ill become thy family and name,
Becauſe unjuſt; but thou behold'ſt thy fate.

CRE. Theſeus, it was not that I thought this city
Without or guards to ſave, or laws to rule,
Which brought me here, nor unadviſed I came,
But that I hoped you never would receive
My kindred here againſt my will, nor e'er
Embrace a vile inceſtuous parricide,
Or cheriſh and protect him, in a land
Whoſe court, renown'd for juſtice, ſuffers not
Such poor abandoned exiles to reſide
Within its borders; therefore did I this,
Which yet I had not done, but for the curſes
Which he hath poured on me, and all my race;
Revenge inſpir'd me: anger, well thou know'ſt,
Can never be extinguiſhed but by death,
Which cloſeth ev'ry wound: at preſent, Theſeus,
It muſt be as thou wilt; my want of power,
How juſt ſoe'er my cauſe, demands ſubmiſſion;
Yet old and weak, I ſhall not tamely yield.

ŒDI. Audacious man! think'ſt thou the vile reproach,
Thou utter'ſt, falls on me, or on thyſelf?
Thou who upbraid'ſt me thus for all my woes,
Murther and inceſt, which againſt my will
I had committed; ſo it pleaſed the gods,
Offended at my race for former crimes,
But I am guiltleſs; canſt thou name a fault
Deſerving this? for tell me, was it mine,
When to my father Phœbus did declare
That he ſhould one day periſh by the hand
Of his own child; was Œdipus to blame,
Who had no being then? if, born at length
To wretchedneſs, he met his ſire unknown,
And ſlew him, that involuntary deed
Canſt thou condemn? and for my fatal marriage,
Doſt thou not bluſh to name it? was not ſhe
Thy ſiſter, ſhe who bore me, ignorant
And guiltleſs woman! afterwards my wife,
And mother to my children? what ſhe did,
She did unknowing! not like thee, who thus
Doſt purpoſely upbraid us both; heaven knows
Unwillingly I wedded her, and now
Unwillingly repeat the dreadful tale;
But, not for that, nor for my murthered father,
Have I deſerved thy bitter taunts; for tell me,
Thy life attacked, wouldſt thou have ſtayed to aſk
The aſſaſſin if he were thy father? no,
Self-love would urge thee to revenge the inſult:
Thus was I drove to ill by the angry gods;
This, ſhould my father's ſoul reviſit earth,
Himſelf would own, and pity Œdipus.
Thy bold and impious tongue ſtill utters all;
Juſt or unjuſt thou pour'ſt thy foul reproach
On me, pretending to revere the name

Of Theſeus and his country; but remember,
The city, whom thou thus haſt praiſed, is famed
For piety, and reverence to the gods;
Yet wouldſt thou drive a needy ſuppliant thence,
And lead him captive; thou haſt ſtolen my daughter,
But I implore the dreadful goddeſſes
To grant me aid, thou mayſt feel the power
Which thou contemn'ſt, and know the force of Athens.

CHO. [to Theſeus] O! king, this ſtranger merits thy
His woes are great, his cauſe ſhould be defended. [regard,

THE. No more, the raviſhers are fled with ſpeed,
Whilſt we, who ſuffer, ſtand inactive here.

CRE. Speak thy commands, for I muſt yield to thee.

THE. Go thou before me, I ſhall follow cloſe;
If here thou haſt concealed the virgins, now
Diſcover them; if hence, to other's hands
Committed, they are fled, they ſhall not 'ſcape,
My ſervants ſoon will fetch them back; mean time
Remember thy condition, for thy fate
Hath caught thee in the net which thou hadſt ſpread
For others: but, what evil means acquire
Is ſeldom kept: thou cam'ſt not naked here,
Or unattended, thus to do an act
Of violence; ere long I'll know on what
Thou didſt rely, nor by a ſingle arm
Shall Athens fall inglorious: hear'ſt thou this,
Or are my words unheeded?

CRE. 'Tis not now

A time

What evil means, &c. This maxim is adopted by Plautus, in his Pœnulus, 'malé partum malé diſperit.' We have likewiſe a proverb of our own, though it is rather a courſe one, expreſſive of the ſame ſentiment, viz. 'What is got over the 'devil's back is ſpent under his belly.'

A time to anſwer; we ſhall know at home
What muſt be done.

THE. Thou threat'neſt; but go on.
Stay thou in quiet here, for if I live, [turning to Œdipus.
I will not reſt till I reſtore thy daughters.

[*Exeunt* Theſeus and Creon.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Now the combatants prepare,
And haſten to the field of war,
Theſeus, their great and god-like friend,
The hapleſs virgins ſhall defend.
O! could I hear the dreadful battle roar,
Or near Apollo's ſacred ſhrine,
Or on the torch-enlightened ſhore,
Or Ceres, where thy prieſts their rites divine
Perform, with lips in ſolemn ſilence ſealed,
And myſteries ne'er by mortal tongue revealed.

ANT.

Now the combatants, &c. This is the ſecond ſong, or intermede of the chorus, who, imagining from what had paſſed in the preceding ſcene, that a battle muſt inevitably follow between Theſeus and Creon, form various conjectures concerning the place, where it would be fought: relying on the ſtrength and valour of their countrymen, to whom they preſage certain victory. This gives time for the recovery of Antigone and Iſmene, and prepares the audience for the events in the next act.

On the torch-enlightened ſhore. Torches were carried in the Eluſinian rites, probably in memory of thoſe which Ceres and her attendants are ſuppoſed to have made uſe of in their ſearch after Proſerpine; theſe myſteries were performed by night in the moſt ſolemn manner by the Eumolpidæ, or prieſts of Ceres; none were admitted to them but the pure and unſpotted, who were bound to inviolable ſecrecy.

ANTISTROPHE I.

At yon ſnow mountain's feet
Weſtward perchance the warriors meet;
Chariot and horſe with mutual rage
On Œta's flowery plains engage;
Around their Theſeus now, a valiant band,
See Athens' martial ſons unite
To ſave their native land;
All ſhake their glittering ſpears, and urge the fight;
All who thy power, equeſtrian Pallas, own,
Or bow to Neptune, Rhea's honoured ſon.

STROPHE II.

The bloody ſcene ſhall ſoon be o'er,
Creon the virgin ſhall reſtore;
My ſoul prophetic ſees the maid
For pious duty thus repaid;
For ever active is the power of Jove,
From whom perpetual bleſſings flow:
O! that I now could, like the dove,
Soar through the ſkies, and mark the field below,
The wiſhed-for conqueſt joyful to behold,
And triumph in the victory I foretold!

ANTISTROPHE II.

Thou power ſupreme, all powers above,
All-ſeeing, all-performing Jove,
Grant that the rulers of this land
May ſoon ſubdue the hoſtile band!
Thee too, O! Pallas, hunter Phœbus, thee
Do we invoke, with thee be joined
Thy virgin ſiſter deity,
Who loves o'er lawns to chaſe the ſpotted hind;
On you we call, your aid propitious bring,
O! haſte, protect our country and our king. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

ŒDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

I'M no falſe prophet, ſtranger, for behold
Thy daughters.

ŒDI. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou, where, O! where?

ANT. My father, O! my father, what kind god
Raiſed up this friend who hath reſtored us to thee?

ŒDI. Are then my daughters with me?

ANT. Theſeus' arm
Hath brought us here; to him and to his friends
We owe our ſafety.

ŒDI. O! come nigh, my children,
Let me embrace you; never did I think
Again to fold you in theſe arms.

ANT. We come
With joy, my father.

ŒDI. O! where are you?

ANT. Here.

ŒDI. My deareſt children!

ANT. To our father ſtill
May every pleaſure come!

ŒDI. [leaning on Antigone.] My beſt ſupport!

ANT. The wretched bear the wretched.

ŒDI. [embracing them.] I have all
That's precious to me; were I now to die,
Whilſt you are here, I ſhould not be unhappy:
Support me, daughters, to your father's ſide
Cloſe preſſed; O! ſooth to peace a wretched exile,
Long time deſerted: tell me what hath happened,

But

But let the tale be ſhort, as beſt becomes
Thy tender age.

ANT. [pointing to Theſeus.] Here is our great pro-
He will inform you; ſo ſhall what I ſpeak [tector,
Be brief, as thou wouldſt have it.

ŒDI. Noble Theſeus,
My children thus beyond my hopes reſtored,
If I ſhould talk too long on ſuch a theme,
Thou wilt not wonder; 'tis to thee alone
I owe my joys; thou didſt protect and ſave
My much-loved daughters; may the gods repay
Thee and thy kingdom for this goodneſs to me!
Here only have I found or faith, or truth,
Or juſtice; you alone poſſeſs them all;
I will atteſt it, for I know it well;
I feel your virtues; what I have is all
From you. O! king, permit me but to touch
Thy hand! O! ſtretch it forth, or let me kiſs
Thy honoured lips! but O! what do I ſay?
Can ſuch a wretch as Œdipus e'er hope
With guilty hands to touch a man like thee,
So pure, ſo ſpotleſs? yet I muſt embrace thee;
They only who have known misfortunes feel
For other's griefs with ſympathiſing woe.
Hail! beſt of men, and mayſt thou ever be,
As thou haſt been, my guardian and my friend!

THE. Thus happy as thou muſt be in thy children,
Hadſt thou ſaid more, much more, and talked to them
Rather than me, it had not moved my wonder;
Nor think I ſhould reſent it; not by words
Would Theſeus be diſtinguiſhed, but by deeds
Illuſtrious; this thou know'ſt, for what I ſwore
I have performed, reſtored thy daughters to thee,

Safe from the tyrant's threats; how paſt the conflict
Why ſhould I boaſt? they at their leiſure beſt
May tell you all; mean time to what I heard,
As hither coming, Œdipus, attend:
Of little import ſeemed the circumſtance,
And yet 'twas ſtrange; but nought ſhould mortal man
Deem or beneath his notice or his care.

ŒDI. What is it, ſon of Ægeus? O! inform me,
For nothing have I heard.

THE. A man, they ſay,
Who boaſts himſelf by blood allied to thee,
At Neptune's altar whilſt I ſacrificed,
In humbleſt poſture ſtood.

ŒDI. What could it mean?
Whence came he?

THE. That I know not; this alone
They told me, ſuppliant he requeſted much
To talk a while with thee.

ŒDI. With me! 'tis ſtrange,
And yet, methinks, important.

THE. He deſired
But to converſe with thee, and then depart.

ŒDI. Who can it be?

THE. Haſt thou no friend at Argos,
None of thy kindred there, who wiſhed to ſee thee?

ŒDI. No more, my friend.

THE. What ſayſt thou?

ŒDI. Do not aſk me.

THE. Aſk what——

ŒDI. I know him now; I know too well
Who's at the altar.

THE.

I know him now. Œdipus is, at firſt, at a loſs to gueſs who this ſtranger could be that inquired after him, but, on recollection,

THE. Who is it?
ŒDI. My ſon;
That hateful ſon, whoſe voice I loath to hear.
THE. But why not hear him? ſtill thou mayſt refuſe
What he ſhall aſk.
ŒDI. I cannot, cannot bear it;
Do not oblige me.
THE. But the ſacred place,
Where now he ſtands, and reverence to the gods,
Demand it of thee.
ANT. Let me, O! my father,
Young as I am, admoniſh thee! O! grant
Thy friend his juſt requeſt; obey the gods,
And let our brother come; whate'er he ſays
It need not draw thee from thy firſt reſolve.
What harm to hear him? words have oft produced
The nobleſt works; remember 'tis thy child,
Thou didſt beget him; though he were the worſt
Of ſons to thee, yet would it ill become
A father to return it: let him come.
Others, like thee, have baſe unworthy children,
And yet their minds are ſoftened to forgiveneſs
By friend's advice, and all their wrath ſubdued.
Think on thy own unhappy parent's fate,
Thence mayſt thou learn what dreadful ills have flowed
From anger's bitter fountain; thou, alas!
Art a ſad proof; thoſe ſightleſs eyes too well
Bear witneſs to it; thoſe who only aſk

concludes it was his ſon. 'Antigone & ſa ſœur (ſays Brumoy) 'devinent, que c'eſt leur frere Polynice, & elles le diſent à leur 'pere;' the French critic is here miſtaken, for Œdipus is not told by his daughters, but imagines himſelf it muſt be Polynices, as ſoon as Theſeus mentions his coming from Argos.

What juſtice warrants, ſhould not aſk in vain,
Nor who receives a benefit, forget
The hand that gave, but ſtudy to repay it.

ŒDI. You have o'ercome me: with reluctant pleaſure
I yield; my children, be it as you pleaſe:
But if he comes, O! Theſeus, guard my life.

THE. I've ſaid enough; no more: I will not boaſt,
But thou art ſafe if heaven forſakes not me.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

In ſacred wiſdom's path is ſeldom ſeen
The wretch whom ſordid love of wealth inſpires;
Neglectful of the happy golden mean,
His ſoul nor truth nor heavenly knowledge fires;
No length of days to him can pleaſure bring,
In death alone he finds repoſe,
End of his wiſhes and his woes
In that uncomfortable night
Where never muſic's charms delight,
Nor virgin choirs their hymenæls ſing.

ANTISTROPHE.

The happieſt fate of man is not to be;
And next in bliſs is he who, ſoon as born,

From

With reluctant pleaſure. The original is remarkably elegant: 'Βαρειαν ηδονην νικατε με.' I have endeavoured to render it as cloſely as poſſible.

In ſacred wiſdom's path, &c. This is the third ſong or intermede of the chorus, who, ſhocked at the unparalleled misfortunes of Œdipus, fall into ſome melancholy reflections on the miſeries of old age, and the unhapyy condition of human life, in every period of it: this gives time, and prepares the audience, for the arrival of Polynices.

From the vain world and all its ſorrows free,
Shall whence he came with ſpeedieſt foot return;
For youth is full of folly, toils, and woe,
Of war, ſedition, pain and ſtrife,
With all the buſy ills of life,
Till helpleſs age comes creeping on,
Deſerted, friendleſs, and alone,
Which neither power, nor joy, nor pleaſure knows.

EPODE.

The hapleſs Œdipus, like me,
Is doomed to age and miſery;
E'en as around the northern ſhore
The bleak winds howl, and tempeſts roar,
Contending ſtorms in terror meet,
And daſhing waves for ever beat;
Thus is the wretched king with grief oppreſt
And woes on woes afflict his long-diſtempered breaſt.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS,

ANTIGONE.

THIS way, my father, lo! the wretched man
Approaches, unattended and in tears.

ŒDI. Who comes, my child?

ANT. E'en he I told thee of,
Poor Polynices.

Enter POLYNICES.

POL. O! my ſiſters, ſee

O! my ſiſters, &c. Nothing can be more artful, tender, and pathetic, than this ſpeech of Polynices: conſcious of his own guilt, and well acquainted with the fiery diſpoſition of his father, he ad-

Of all mankind the moſt unhappy; where
Shall I begin? ſhall I lament my own,
Or ſhall I weep an aged parent's fate?
For, O! 'tis horrible to find him thus
A wandering exile in a foreign land;
In this mean garb, with wild diſhevelled hair,
Bereft of ſight, and deſtitute, perhaps,
Of needful food and nouriſhment; alas!
Too late I know it, worthleſs as I am,
I flew to ſuccour him, to plead my cauſe,
That not from others he might hear the tale
Of my misfortunes; ſacred pity ſits
Faſt by the throne of Jove, o'er all his works
Preſiding gracious; O! let her inſpire
Thy breaſt, my father; crimes already done,
Which cannot be recalled, may ſtill be healed
By kind forgiveneſs; why then art thou ſilent?
O! ſpeak, my father, do not turn aſide;
Wilt thou not anſwer? wilt thou let me go
Without one word; nor tell me whence thy wrath
Contemptuous ſprings? my ſiſters, you at leaſt
Will try to move his unrelenting heart,
And looſen his cloſed lips, that not thus ſpurned
And thus unanſwered, though a ſuppliant here
At Neptune's altar, I return with ſhame
And foul diſgrace.

ANT. Say, wherefore didſt thou come,
My hapleſs brother, tell thy mournful tale:
Such is the power of words, that whether ſweet

They

dreſſes himſelf firſt to his ſiſters, and then ſlides as it were inſenſibly into his modeſt and humble ſupplication, clothed in terms that muſt have moved any but the implacable Œdipus.

They move ſoft pity, or when bitter urge
To violence and wrath, at leaſt they ope
Th' unwilling lips, and make the ſilent ſpeak.
POL. 'Tis well adviſed, and I will tell thee all.
O! may that deity propitious ſmile,
Whoſe altar late I left, whence Theſeus raiſed
This wretched ſuppliant, and in converſe free
Mixed gracious with me! may I hope from you
The like benevolence! and now, my father,
I'll tell thee wherefore Polynices came.
Thou ſeeſt me baniſhed from my native land,
Unjuſtly baniſhed, for no other crime
But that I ſtrove to keep the throne of Thebes,
By birthright mine, from him, who drove me thence,
The young Eteocles: not his the claim
By juſtice, nor to me his fame in arms
Superior, but by ſoft perſuaſive arts
He won the rebel city to his love.
Thy curſe, my father, was the cauſe of all,
I know it was; for ſo the prieſts declared
In oracles divine: to Argos then
I came, and to Adraſtus' daughter joined
In marriage, gained the Argive chiefs, renowned
For martial deeds; ſeven valiant leaders march
To Thebes, reſolved to conquer or to die.
Therefore to thee, my father, came I here,
To beg thy aid for me and theſe my friends,
Companions of the war, who threaten Thebes
With their united powers, in order thus:
The wiſe an brave Amphiarus, or ſkilled To

The wiſe and brave, &c. In the original, it is firſt Amphiaraus, 'ſecond Tydeus, third Eteocles, &c.' but this would have appeared extremely harſh and aukward in a literal tranſlation.

To caſt the ſpear, or with prophetic tongue
Diſcloſe the will of heaven, with Æneus' ſon,
Ætolian Tydeus, and Eteocles,
At Argos born; to theſe, Hippomedon,
Sent by Talaus, his renowned ſire,
Bold Capaneus, who threatens ſoon to raze
The walls of mighty Thebes; to cloſe the train,
Parthenopæan Arcas comes, the ſon
Of Atalantis, from her virgin name
So called: with theſe, thy hapleſs ſon (the child
Of dire misfortune rather) leads his force
From Argos to rebellious Thebes; for theſe,
And for their children, for the lives of all,
Suppliant to thee we come, in humble prayer,
To deprecate thy wrath againſt a wretch
Who, injured much, but ſeeks the vengeance due
To a baſe brother, whoſe oppreſſive hand
Hath drove me from my country and my throne;
If there be truth in what the gods declare.
On him ſhall victory ſmile, for whom thy vows
Shall riſe propitious; therefore, by our gods,
And native fountains, O! remit thy anger,
And ſmile upon me, on a baniſhed man,
A beggar like thyſelf, who lives, like thee,
By other's bounty; in one common fate
We are united, whilſt the tyrant ſits
In eaſe at home, and laughs our woes to ſcorn:
Yet if thou wouldſt but liſten to my vows,
Soon might I caſt him forth, reſtore thee ſoon
To thy dear native land, and ſeat myſelf
In my own kingdom: thy aſſent, my father,
Is all I aſk; but, O! without thy aid,
I have no hope of ſafety or revenge.

CHO. For Theſeus' ſake, O! give him anſwer now,
And let him go.

ŒDI. But that the noble Theſeus,
Who hither brought him, did requeſt it of me,
He ne'er had heard the voice of Œdipus;
And little pleaſure will it now beſtow:
Ungrateful wretch! who, when the throne of Thebes,
[turning to Polynices]
Where now thy brother ſits, was thine, didſt drive
Thy father hence, to penury and woe:
Now, when thou ſeeſt me in this mean attire,
Thou weep'ſt my fate, becauſe 'tis like thy own;
But I'll not weep, for I can bear it all,
Still, wicked parricide, remembering thee,
The cruel cauſe of all; thou mad'ſt me thus
On other's bounty to rely for food
And nouriſhment; for thee, I might have periſhed,
But theſe my pious daughters, theſe alone,
Beyond their ſex's power, with manly aid
Have cheriſhed and protected me: for you,
Who call yourſelves my ſons, ye are not mine,
I know you not; though heaven hath ſpared you long,
Death will o'ertake you; when thy forces come
To Thebes, which ſhall not fall before thy arms,
There ſoon ſhalt thou and thy vile brother die:
Long ſince my curſes did declare thy fate,
Which here I do repeat, that you may learn

The

But that the noble Theſeus, &c. The curſe which Œdipus here pronounces againſt his ſons, hath ſomething in it very awful and terrible; eſpecially if we conſider it as ſpoken before an audience thoroughly convinced that the curſes of offended parents were always inflicted, and the prophecies of dying men always fulfilled. Nothing perhaps but Shakeſpear's Lear can exceed it.

The reverence due to parents, and no more
Reproach a ſightleſs father: look on theſe
My duteous daughters, did they act like you?
They never did; and therefore to the throne,
Which you have forfeited, ſhall they ſucceed,
If juſtice ſtill, as ſhe is ever wont,
Sits at the hand of Jove: mean time, thou worſt,
Thou moſt abandoned of the race of men,
Be gone, away, and with thee bear this curſe,
Which here I do pronounce; to Argos ne'er
Mayſt thou return! never may Thebes be thine!
Soon mayſt thou periſh by a brother's hand,
Slaying the ſlayer? may dark Erebus
Receive them both! and now on you I call,
Ye goddeſſes revered, and thou, O! Mars,
Thou, who haſt raiſed the bitter ſtrife between
My impious ſons, bear witneſs to my words!
Farewel: now go, and tell the Thebans, tell
Thy faithful friends how fair an heritage
Your Œdipus hath here bequeathed his children.

CHO. O! Polynices, little is the joy
Which we can give thee of this fatal journey,
Therefore away and leave us.

POL. A ſad path
Theſe ſteps have trod indeed, of woe to me
And to my friends; was it for this, alas!
I came from Argos? I can never tell

My

O! Polynices, &c. Brumoy obſerves, that the more we conſider this tender ſcene, between Polynices and his ſiſter, the more natural, charming, and pathetic we ſhall find it; the fate of every thing that has intrinſic merit, ſays he, is to ſtrike us but little at firſt view, to improve on the ſecond, and always to appear the more beautiful, the more we examine it.

My mournful ſtory there, never return;
O! I muſt bury it in ſilence all.
My ſiſters, ye have heard the dreadful curſe
Which he pronounced; O! if it be fulfilled,
And ſome kind hand reſtore you back to Thebes,
At leaſt remember me; at leaſt perform
The funeral rites, and hide me in the tomb;
So ſhall your names, for pious tenderneſs
To an unhappy father long revered,
With added praiſes crowned, exalted ſhine,
For this kind office to a brother's ſhade.

ANT. O! Polynices, let me beg thee, hear
Thy ſiſter now.

POL. My dear Antigone,
What ſay'ſt thou?

ANT. Lead thy armies back to Argos,
Nor thus deſtroy thy country and thyſelf.

POL. It cannot be; my forces, once diſmiſſed
Through fear, what power ſhall ever reunite them?

ANT. But wherefore all this rage? what canſt thou hope
Of fame or profit by the fall of Thebes?

POL. 'Tis baſe to fly, and, eldeſt born as I am,
To be the laughter of a younger brother.

ANT. Doſt thou not dread the oracles pronounced
Againſt you both, death by each other's hand?

POL. I know the ſentence, but we muſt go on.

ANT. Alas! and who ſhall dare to follow thee
After this dire prediction?

POL. None ſhall know it.
The prudent general tells the good alone,
And keeps the threatened ill unknown to all.

ANT. Art thou determined then, and wilt thou go?

POL. Do not diſſuade me, for the taſk is mine;

And though a father's fatal curſe attend me,
Though vengeful furies ſhall await my ſteps,
Yet I muſt go: may Jove indulgent ſmile
On you, my ſiſters, if, when I am dead,
As ſoon I ſhall be, to my breathleſs corpſe
You pay due honours! now farewel for ever,
For living ye ſhall ne'er again behold me.

ANT. Alas! my brother!

POL. Do not weep for me.

ANT. Who would not weep to ſee thee ruſhing thus
On certain death?

POL. If I muſt die, I muſt.

ANT. Yet be perſuaded.

POL. Aſk me not to do
A deed unworthy of me.

ANT. Loſing thee,
I ſhall be moſt unhappy.

POL. To the gods
Alone belong the fate of mortals; ſome
Are born to happineſs, and ſome to woe:
You may they guard from every ill, for ſure
Ye merit all the good they can beſtow.

[*Exit* Polynices.

CHO. Freſh ſorrows hath this hapleſs ſtranger brought
On me and all; but ſo hath heaven decreed,
Which nothing doth in vain; whilſt time beholds
And orders all, inflicting woe on woe:
But hark! the thunder roars: almighty Jove!

ŒDI.

Freſh ſorrows, &c. From this place to the arrival of Theſeus, the chorus in the original, being in ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, was probably ſet to muſic and ſung; but as it is interrupted by the dialogue, the reaſons for not throwing it into ode or rhyme in the tranſlation are ſufficiently obvious.

ŒDI. My daughters, O! my daughters, who will bring
The noble Theſeus here, that beſt of men?
ANT. Wherefore, my father, ſhould we call him hither?
ŒDI. This winged lightning from the arm of Jove,
Muſt bear me to the ſhades below. Where's Theſeus?
Let him be ſent for inſtantly.
CHO. Again!
Another dreadful clap! it ſtrikes my ſoul
With horror, and my hairs do ſtand on end
With fear; behold, again the lightnings flaſh;
I dread the conſequence, for not in vain
Theſe ſigns appear, of ſome calamity
Portentous ever: O! æthereal Jove;
ŒDI. Alas! my children, nought can ſave me now,
The fatal hour of my departure hence
Draws nigh.
ANT. Why think'ſt thou ſo!
ŒDI. I know it well:
Send for the king immediately.
CHO. Alas!
The thunder rolls on every ſide; good heaven
Protect us! if to this devoted land
It bodes deſtruction, let not ruin fall
On me; O let not that be our reward
For pitying thus a poor deſerted ſtranger!
O! Jove! on thee we call, protect and ſave us?
ŒDI. Is Theſeus come, ſhall he once more behold me,
Whilſt yet I live, and keep my perfect mind?
CHO. What ſecret haſt thou to reveal to him?
ŒDI. I owe him much, and would repay his goodneſs,
E'en as I promiſed him.
CHO. O! haſte, my ſon;
At Neptune's altar leave the ſacrifice,

And

And hither fly, for Œdipus, to thee
And to thy country grateful, waits to pay
Thy bounties; haſte, O! Theſeus, to receive them.

Enter THESEUS.

THE. Again this noiſe, this wild aſtoniſhment,
Amongſt you all! was Œdipus the cauſe?
Or did the bolt of Jove, and ruſhing hail,
Affright you? when the god in raging ſtorms
Deſcends thus dreadful, we have cauſe to fear.

ŒDI. O! king, thou com'ſt in happy hour, ſome god
Propitious led thee hither.

THE. Son of Laius,
What new event hath happened?

ŒDI. Know, my life
At length is verging to its lateſt hour;
I wiſh to die, but firſt my vows to thee,
And to this city, faithful muſt perform.

THE. But who hath told thee thou ſo ſoon ſhalt die?

ŒDI. The gods themſelves, who never utter falſhood,
By ſigns infallible, have warned me of it.

THE. How ſpake they to thee?

ŒDI. In repeated thunder
And lightning, from th' all-powerful hand of Jove.

THE. I do believe thee, for thy prophecies
Were never falſe; but ſay, what muſt be done?

ŒDI. O! ſon of Ægeus, I will tell thee all
The bliſs reſerved for thee in thy age,
For thee, and for thy country; I muſt go
To my appointed place, and there ſhall die:
I go without a guide, nor muſt thou tell
To mortal ear where Œdipus doth lie,
For ever hid; O! king, that ſacred place
Shall be thy ſure defence, and better far

Than many a ſhield, or all the ſocial aid
Of firm alliance in the field of war:
What more remains, unutterable now,
Of higher import, thither when thou com'ſt
To thee alone ſhall be delivered; nought
Shall I reveal, or to the citizens,
Or e'en to theſe, beloved as they are,
My pious daughters; thou muſt ever keep
The ſolemn ſecret, only when thy life
Draws near its end, diſcloſe it to thy ſon,
Heir of thy kingdom, and to him alone:
From king to king thus ſhall the tale devolve,
And thus thy Athens be for ever ſafe
From Theban force; even the beſt of cities,
Where juſtice rules, may ſwerve from virtue's laws,
And be oppreſſive, but the gods, though late,
Will one day puniſh all who diſobey
Their ſacred mandates; therefore, ſon of Ægeus,
Be careful, and be juſt; but this to thee
I need not ſay: quick let us to the place,
For ſo the gods decree: there muſt I go,
Thence never to return: come then, my daughters,
Long have ye been my pious guides, henceforth
I muſt be yours; follow, but touch me not!
Let me find out the tomb where I muſt hide
My poor remains; that way my journey lies;
[pointing with his hand]
Away: thou god of ſhades, great Mercury,
And Proſerpine, infernal powers, conduct me!
O! ſightleſs eyes, where are ye? never more
Shall theſe hands touch your unavailing orbs,
O! light and life, farewel, at length I go
To hide me in the tomb; but O! for thee,
My beſt beloved friend, and this fair land,

And theſe thy ſubjects, may proſperity
Attend you ſtill, and may you ſometimes deign
Amidſt your bliſs to think on Œdipus! [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

Goddeſs inviſible, on thee we call,
If thee we may invoke, Proſerpina, and thee,
Great Pluto, king of ſhades, O grant
That not, oppreſſed by torturing pain,
Beneath the ſtroke of death he linger long,
But ſwift with eaſy ſteps deſcend,
To Styx's drear abode;
For he hath led a life of toil and pain;
May the juſt gods repay his undeſerved woe!
Ye goddeſſes revered, who dwell
Beneath the earth deep hid, and thou,
Who, barking from thy gloomy cave,
Unconquered Cerb'rus, guard'ſt the ghoſts below,
On thee, O! ſon of Tartarus, we call,
For thou art ever wakeful, lead, O! lead
To thy dark manſions this unhappy ſtranger.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O! Citizens, I come to tell a tale——
But to be brief, know, Œdipus is dead. To

Goddeſs inviſible, &c. This is the fourth ſong, or intermede of the chorus, who, perceiving that the death of Œdipus is unavoidable, and every moment to be expected, put up their prayers to the infernal powers for his eaſy and peaceful departure; the original conſiſts, like the other choruſſes, of ſtrophe and antiſtrophe: I have taken the liberty to throw the whole into one irregular ode, of varied meaſures without rhyme.

Œdipus is dead. The length of this deſcription, and the num-

To ſpeak the manner and ſtrange circumſtance
Of his departure will require more words,
And calls for your attention.

CHO. Is he gone?
Unhappy man!

MES. For ever hath he left
The path of life.

CHO. How died he? by the hand
Of heaven diſmiſſed, without diſeaſe or pain?

MES. O! 'twas a ſcene of wonder; how he left
This place, and, ſelf-conducted, led us on,
Blind as he was, ye all remember well.
Soon as he came to where the craggy ſteep,
With brazen ſteps, leads to the hollow gulph,
Where various paths unite, a place renowned
For the famed league of Theſeus and his friend,
Between Acherdus and the Thracian rock,
On a ſepulchral ſtone he ſat him down;
Pulled off the filthy weeds he long had worn,
And bade his daughters inſtantly prepare
The bath and ſplendid garb; with haſty ſteps

ber of circumſtances recounted in it, ſeem to make it highly improbable that ſo many things could have happened in the ſhort ſpace of time allowed for them, being only from the exit of Œdipus to the entrance of the meſſenger. There is no way of excuſing Sophocles in this particular, but by ſuppoſing that the preceding ode of the chorus being ſet to muſic, might take up a long time in the performance; perhaps the impatience of the ſpectator to know the cataſtrophe may plead ſtill more ſtrongly in defence of this precipitation.

O! 'twas a ſcene of wonder, &c. The celebrated critic Longinus takes notice, in his treatiſe on the ſublime, of this narration of Œdipus's death, as a proof of Sophocles' peculiar excellency in the deſcriptive.

To Ceres' neighbouring altar they repair
Obedient, bring the veſſel, and the robe
Funeral; all things done, as cuſtom bids
For dying men, ſudden a dreadful clap
Of thunder ſhook the ground; the virgins trembled,
And, clinging fearful round their father's knees,
Beat their ſad breaſts, and wept; ſoon as he heard
The ſound portentous, he embraced his daughters:
Children, he cried, your father is no more;
No longer ſhall you lead a life of pain,
No longer toil for Œdipus; alas!
'Twas dreadful to you, but this day, my children,
Shall end your ſorrows and my life together:
Never did father love his daughters more
Than I have loved, but henceforth you muſt live
Without your Œdipus; farewel for ever!
He ſpake, and, long in ſad embraces joined,
They wept aloud; at length did clamorous grief
To ſilent ſorrow yield, and all was ſtill;
When ſuddenly we heard a voice that oft
Repeated, 'Œdipus, why this delay?
'Where art thou, Œdipus?' the wretched king,
Attentive to the call of heaven, deſired
That Theſeus might be ſent for; Theſeus came.
When thus the dying exile; O! my friend,
Give me thy hand, my daughters give him yours,
Let this, my deareſt Theſeus, be the pledge
Of amity between you, promiſe here
That you will ne'er forſake my hapleſs children,
But henceforth cheriſh, comfort, and protect them,
The generous king, in pity to their woes,
Vow'd to perform what Œdipus deſired:
The father threw his feeble arms around
His weeping children; you, he cried, muſt learn

To bear your ſufferings with an equal mind,
And leave this place; for not to mortal eye
Is given to ſee my future fate; away,
Theſeus alone muſt ſtay, and know it all.
This did we hear him utter as we ſtood
Attentive; when his duteous daughters left him,
And went their way; we wept, and followed them;
Soon we returned, but Œdipus was gone;
The king, alone remaining, as if ſtruck
With terror at ſome dreadful ſpectacle,
Had with his hand o'er-veiled his downcaſt eye;
A little after we beheld him bend
In humble adoration to the earth,
And then to heaven prefer his ardent prayer:
How the poor exile periſhed none can tell
But Theſeus; nor the fiery blaſt of Jove
Deſtroyed, nor ſea o'erwhelmed, him; but from heaven
Some meſſenger divine did ſnatch him hence,
Or power infernal bade the pitying earth
Open her peaceful boſom to receive him:
Without a groan, diſeaſe or pain, he fell:
'Twas wonderous all: to thoſe who credit not
This ſtrange report, I anſwer, 'tis moſt true.

CHO. Where are his daughters, with their weeping friends
Who followed them?

MES. They cannot be far off;
The voice of grief I hear proclaims them nigh.

Enter ANTIGONE, ISMENE, with Attendants.

ANT. Alas! the time is come when we muſt weep
Our father's fate, the fate of all his race
Long ſince unhappy; various were the toils,
The labours we endured, but this is far,
Far above all, unutterable woe.

CHO. What is it?

ANT.

ANT. O! it cannot be conceived.
CHO. Is he then dead?
ANT. He is: his death was ſtrange
And wonderful; for not in war he fell,
Nor did the ſea o'erwhelm him, but the earth
Hath hid him from us; deadly night hath cloſed
Our eyes in ſadneſs; whether o'er the ſeas
We roam, or exiles in a foreign land
Lead our ſad days, we muſt be ſtill unhappy:
Alas! I only wiſh I might have died
With my poor father; wherefore ſhould I aſk
For longer life?
CHO. Ye good and pious daughters,
Remember, what the will of heaven decrees
With patience we muſt bear; indulge not, then,
Exceſs of grief; your fate hath not deſerved it.
ANT. O! I was fond of miſery with him;
E'en what was moſt unlovely grew beloved,
When he was with me. O! my deareſt father,
Beneath the earth now in deep darkneſs hid,
Worn as thou wert with age, to me thou ſtill
Wert dear and ſhalt be ever.
CHO. Now his courſe
Is finiſhed.
ANT. Even as he wiſhed, he died
In a ſtrange land, for ſuch was his deſire;
A ſhady turf covered his lifeleſs limbs;
Nor unlamented fell! for O! theſe eyes,
My father, ſtill ſhall weep for thee, nor time
E'er blot thee from my memory.
ISM. Alas!
Alas! my ſiſter, what muſt be our fate,
Forlorn and helpleſs, of our father thus
Bereſt!

CHO.

CHO. His end was happy, therefore ceaſe
Your fruitleſs tears: from ſorrow none is free.
ANT. Let us begone.
ISM. But where?
ANT. I wiſh——
ISM. O! what?
ANT. To ſee the tomb.
ISM. Whoſe tomb?
ANT. Our father's: Oh!
ISM. But is it lawful? know'ſt thou that?
ANT. Why thus
Reprove me, my Iſmene?
ISM. He is yet
Unburied, and without——
ANT. O! lead me there,
Then kill me if thou wilt; for where, alas!
Can I betake me?
CHO. Friends, be comforted.
ANT. Where ſhall I fly?
CHO. Thou haſt already 'ſcaped
Unnumbered ills.
ANT. I'm thinking, my Iſmene——
ISM. What think'ſt thou?
ANT. How we ſhall get home.
CHO. No more;
Thou haſt been long familiar with affliction.
ANT. My life hath ever been a life of pain
And ſorrow, but this far exceeds them all.
CHO. The ſtorm beats hard upon you.
ANT. O! it doth.
CHO. I know it muſt.
ANT. O! whither ſhall we fly?
Great Jove! what hope remains?
CHO. Suppreſs your griefs;

We ſhould not weep for thoſe who wiſhed to die,
And meet their fate with pleaſure; 'tis not juſt
Nor lawful to lament them.

[*Exeunt* Meſſenger and Attendants.

Enter THESEUS.

ANT. Son of Ægeus,
Suppliant to thee we come.

THE. What would ye of me?

ANT. Permit us but to ſee our father's tomb.

THE. It is not lawful.

ANT. O! What ſay'ſt thou, king?

THE. Know, pious virgins, Œdipus himſelf
Forbade that any ſhould approach his tomb;
That ſacred ſpot which he poſſeſſes there,
No mortal muſt prophane: to me, he ſaid,
If careful I performed his laſt command,
Should joy and ſafety come, with victory
And peace to Athens; this your gods did hear,
Confirmed by the ſacred oath of Jove.

ANT. If ſuch our father's will, we muſt ſubmit;
But O! permit us to reviſit Thebes,
That ſo we may prevent th' impending fate
Of our dear brothers.

THE. All that you requeſt,
Or may be grateful to that honoured ſhade,
Whoſe memory we revere, I freely grant;
For I muſt not be weary of my taſk.

CHO. Remember, virgins, to repreſs your ſorrows,
And ceaſe your fruitleſs grief; for know, 'tis all
Decreed by fate, and all the work of heaven.

FINIS.

